

THE HEART OF RELIGION OPENED.
AND
Covenant Security and Happiness display'd.

IN THREE
SERMONS.

THE I. Sermon presents to View the Pleasure and Profit of an engaged Heart for God, in Duty.

THE II Sermon shews, who are God's Covenant People; with their Properties and Privileges.

THE III Sermon proves, That the Security and Happiness of a People, arises wholly from God's Covenant Promise, which is, That God himself, *will be their God.*

By S. ACTON.

H COR. vi. xvii, xviii. *Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye sepearte fith the Lo'd, and touch not the Unclean Thing, and I will rece'be you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my Sins and Daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*

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The EPISTLE,

My Brethren, and
Courteous Reader,

PERhaps some may interpret me conceited and ambitious from my appearing so frequently in Print, but the Goodness of my Design will comfortably sustain me under such Censures (if any such there be) my Intent is not to hurt any, but to be as serviceable to you, my Brethren, as I am able: And as neither Pain nor Cost discourages me therein, I hope you will with the greatest Affection, receive, what I now present unto you; and that you, withal into whose Hands these Lines come, will read them, not as most Men do their Almanacks, which in a little Time are quite out of Date, but so meditate on what is proposed therein, as to dispose you with Delight to make frequent and Religious Approaches to God; and in all your Approaches to him in Duty, that you come with prepared and engaged Hearts, which, next to Christ, will be delightful to him, and render both you, and your Duties acceptable with him. This will draw out his Heart with Affection towards you; whereupon he will make you his People, and bless you with the Privileges peculiar to his Chosen. O therefore make it manifest, that the Properties of God's People (described herein) is the very Frame and Temper of your Souls; and then he, by becoming your God, will secure to you, your many and great Privileges in this World, and the Happiness of that to come, which is the Prayer of,

S. A.

Namptwich,
May 1755.



A
SERMON.

PROVING,

An engaged Heart for God, in Duty, is his
Pleasure, and Man's Duty and Interest.

FROM

Jeremiah xxx, last Part of the 21st and 22^d Verse.
*For who is this that engaged his Heart to approach
unto me? saith the Lord.*

And ye shall be my People, and I will be your God.

TH E Lord having sufferd his People
to fall into their Enemies Hands,
and for their Sins to be carry'd cap-
tive to *Babylon*, where they had been
soundly hamperd for a long Season,
and now in all likelihood, by the
Smart they had endured, were humbled for their
Sins, and taught to know, what an evil Thing it
was to provoke their God to Anger with his Peo-
ple, so, as to deliver 'em up to the Will of their
Enemy, who made 'em to sigh and groan under the
gawling Burdens impos'd on 'em, and the savage
Usage they were treated with.

But in this Chapter the Prophet comes commis-
sion'd to proclaim the good News to *Judah* and
Israel of Deliverance from all their Enemies, and
of their Return to their own Land, where the
Lord will settle them in Peace and Plenty, and take
a full Revenge of all their Enemies, as appears
from

from the 1st Verse to the 15th. In the 15th Verse the Lord takes Notice of their Cries unto him; and tho' from his innate Goodness, he might incline to grant 'em Deliverance, yet to further their Humiliation, or at least to vindicate the Justice of his own Proceedinge, he let's 'em know, that tho' he had severely chastiz'd them, it was because of their many and mighty Sins, *Why cryest thou for thine Affliction? Thy Sorrow is incurable, for the multitude of thy Iniquities, because thy Sins were increased, I have done these Things unto thee.* In the 16th Verse you have a Reason why the Lord will deliver his People, which is, That he may glorify himself in a just and righteous retaliating upon their Enemies all the hard Usage they had receiv'd from them, when in their Hand and Power. *Therefore all that devour thee shall be devoured, and all thy Adversaries shall go into Captivity, &c.* Like a tender Father, when the Child by Correction is wrought into Tears and Submission, he will burn the Rod: When *Lot* is out of *Sodom*, then Fire is let down upon the Cities; when God's People is remov'd from *Babylon*, he will let in their Enemies upon them; which may teach all, when superior to others, to express that Humanity and Mercy to Interiors, as might not be very grievous, in Case they themselves were the Suffering Party.

From the 18th Verse to our Text, you have a Relation of their Restoration, and the happy Effects of it. The Lord will wipe away all their Reproach, their City shall be built, Mercy and heart-glading Blessings shall be on all their Habitations, so, *That the voice of Myrth and Thanksgiving shall come forth from amongst them, their Congregation shall be established, and Security granted them from the Violence of Enemies. Nor shall they be ruled and govern'd by Strangers and Aliens, which before might have been grievous to 'em, but now their Nobles and Governours shall be of themselves, (that is, of their own Blood, and Religion, (as blessed be God ours*

his Pleasure and our Profit.

in Great Britain are) and the Lord will cause them to approach unto him: As if he had said, the ravishing Sense of the many and great Blessings I will settle 'em in the Enjoyment of, will even oblige and force 'em, with the greatest Affection and Candour, to devote themselves to his Service and Honour, a Thing, which he greatly values, and is highly pleas'd with, as appears by his demanding, *Who is this that engageth his Heart to approach unto me, saith the Lord.*

We need not perplex the Words by putting any strain'd Sense upon them, lest we make that dark and doubtful, that lies very plain and open, which Expositors sometimes do by Enquiries, more nice than wise, upon a Text they are criticising on. As here, some will have the Person approaching to God with an engaged Heart, to be *Zorobabel*; others do restrain it to *Christ*; but how it can be apply'd to either, by any fair Construction of any Thing which appears in the Text or Context, I understand not: For tho' there is not any Thing more common in Holy Scripture, than to speak of, and to the whole People of *Israel* as one Person, yet, to restrain or apply this either to *Zorobabel*, or *Christ*, as they are single Persons, would make the Words in the Promise, namely, *And ye shall be my People, and I will be your God*, to speak very oddly, and without good Sense: Nay, worse, as such Interpretations do deprive a People humbled for Sin, and turning to God, of the most engaging Motive thereunto they are capable of, even the great Blessing of being accepted with, and having the Lord for their God, which lie plain in the Words, as they contain a gracious Promise whereby the Lord would encourage his People, whom he was now determin'd to deliver from their Captivity, to devote and yield up themselves most devoutly to him, and his Service.

In the Words we have an Interrogation, *Who is this?* Which may signify the Rarity of the Thing, and

An engaged Heart for God,

and fewness of the Number that engage their Hearts for God in their Approaches to him. Like that of the Prophet, *Who hath believed our Report, and to whom hath the Arm of the Lord been revealed?* **Isaiah. 53. 1.** But in the 19th Verse before our Text you read, that *they shall not be few, nor small*: That is, tho' they wert dwindled away and greatly diminished during the Time of their Captivity, yet upon their becoming a People serious, and sincerely religious, he would according to his wonted Goodness increase and make them grow into a Multitude: Yea, he would dignifie and honour them, who were called an *Out-cast*, and reproached as a People worth no Bodies seeking after: However they were but few in a comparative Sense.

But whatever the Number was, I rather understand the Interrogation to Imploy and note to us, the great delight and pleasure, that God hath in such as approach him with engaged hearts. By Interrogations Men do sometimes deny and sometimes affirm a thing whereof they spake. Sometimes they express detestation and loathing of a thing, as St. Paul, when he says. *Shall we continue in Sin that Grace may abound God forbid.* And sometimes delight and pleasure as David. *Who am I and what is my House O Lord God, that thou hast brought me hitherto.* **2 Sam. 7. 18.** So in our Text, *who is this, that engageth his heart to approach unto me.* Where the Lord condescends to speak to our understanding, and to express delight and pleasure after the manner of Man, who seeing one he loves, whom he has long desired, and often solicited to come unto him, and whom he no sooner sees but he's ravish'd and in a Transport of Joy meets and Carasses him, with a *who is this.* Like the Father of the Prodigal, seeing his Son returning, while he was yet a great way off, the Father ran to meet him, fell on his Neck and kissed him, he Cloaths and adorns him, brings him into the House, kills the Fatted Calf, had Musick and Dancing; they eat and were merry. All

which

which things together denote pleasure and Satisfaction in the highest degree which is farther evident, from the demand Christ makes in relation to the Spouse saying *who is this, that cometh up from the Wilderness leaning upon her Beloved.* Can. 8 5. His enquiry, *who is this?* is not for Information, as if he were Ignorant who it was, but is rather an Expression of his Pleasure and Satisfaction in beholding his Spouse returning, expressing her great Affection, and sensible of her own Weakness by relying wholly upon his Strength and Grace for Support Establishment and Perseverance. So here, the Lord beholding his People whom he loved, had long desired, and often courted, in the Sense of their former Sufferings, and present Mercies devoting themselves with the greatest Seriousness and Solemnity to his Service he speaks not as one Ignorant, who it is, but as in a Transport of Joy, being highly pleas'd and satisfy'd saith, *who is this that engageth his Heart to approach unto me saith the Lord.* From whence I Collect by way of Observation.

Doct. That an engaged Heart for God, when we approach him, in his Worship and Service, is highly pleasing to him; and every Mans Duty and Interest.

The most Pompous Service without an engaged Heart for God, is what he cannot delight in, without that all Duties perform'd are but as so many dead Carcases, loathsome in his pure Eyes, who from the Excellency of his Nature, must despise Lifeless and Heartless Services. Could we approach him with the most eloquent Orations, with the most costly Sacrifices, with the most painful Services, with the choicest Perfumes, with Thousands of Rams, and entertain him with the best form'd Anthems and Penygyericks the ripest Wits can compose and Invent, if they proceed not from a right Temper, a sincerely Religious Disposition of Soul; He can take no more Pleasure in them, than a living Man can among the dry Bones and offensive

An engag'd Heart for God,

Jer. 6.
20.

Amos 5.
21, 22 23.

Isiah 1.
11, &c.

ch. 66. 3.

offensive Relicks of the Dead as is plain from his demanding by the Prophets. To what purpose cometh there to me Incence from Sheba, and sweet Cane from a far Country, your Burnt Offerings are not acceptable, nor your Sacrifices sweets unto me. No, I hate I despise your Feast Days, and I will not smell in your Solemn Assemblies, tho' you offer me burnt Offerings, and your meat Offerings, I will not accept them, neither will I regard the Peace Offerings of your Fat Beasts. Take away from me the Noise of thy Songs, for I will not hear the Melody of thy Vials. Again to what purpose is the Multitude of your Sacrifices unto me saith the Lord, I am full of the burnt Offerings of Rams, and the Fat of fed Beasts, I delight not in the Blood of Bullocks, or of Lambs, or of the Goats when ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your Hands to tread my Courts. Bring no more vain Oblations, Incense is an Abomination to me, the New-Moons and Sabbaths, and the calling of Assemblies I cannot away with. It is Iniquity even the solemn meetings, your New-Moons and your appointed Feasts my Soul hateth, they are a trouble to me, and I am weary to hear them, and when ye spread forth your Hands, I will hide mine Eyes from you, yea, when ye make many Prayers I will not hear &c. Strange expressions of a Compassionate God, what, hate, abhor and reject the very things he had before required at their Hands, Yes, and the very reason, is the looseness of their Hearts and Wickedness of their Lives. He values neither Men nor their Services, tho' never so Solemn, whilst destitute of Pious Dispositions, no more than he doth the Offering of Swines Blood or the Blessing of an Idol.

Now it appearing thus. That the most Painful and valuable Services perform'd by Men, are insignificant and of no Account with God, without an engaged heart for him in Duty. We shall therefore propound this Method, and proceed.

First. To enquire what an engaged Heart for God in Duty is, and what it Imports.

Secondly,

Secondly. We shall assign the Grounds and Reasons why so many, who Worship God, do approach him, without engaged Hearts.

Thirdly. We shall evince, that an engaged Heart for God and his Service, is delightful to him, and the Duty and Interest of every one of us, and then conclude with Application.

First. We are to enquire what an engaged Heart for God in Duty is, and what it Imports. In the general it denotes, a heart Guarded with our utmost diligence against the approaches of Sin, and Satan, sanctify'd and sweetly disposed under the sense of former affliction, and of present Grace and Mercy, to love, and delight in God. Where, by it is render'd fit and meet to be Offer'd to him in every Duty, whether publick or private which we perform. But more particularly it Imports these three things.

First. A cleansing the Heart from all Sin, of which it is brim full, whilst in its depraved and corrupted State, it is a Cage of all unclean Birds, a Sink of all Filth, the Seat of every vile Affection, and the only Fountain from whence proceeds the Vicious Brood, and Trains of God displeasing, and Soul undoing Sins. Sins whereby we provoke the Almighty, render our selves hurtful in Conversation to others and Obnoxious to the grievous Judgments of a justly provoked and angry God, which our blessed Saviour tells us saying out of the Heart proceeds evil Thoughts, Murders, Adulteries, Fornication Thefts, false Witness, Blasphemies. Mat. 15. 19. 20. And as these and such like are the things which defile a Man, so they are the things we must get our Hearts cleansed of, as we would make Acceptable into the Presence of a perfectly holy God. Therefore says the Apostle, Cleanse your Hands ye Sinners, and purifie your Hearts ye double Minded. And Zophar to Job. Ch. 1. 12. 13. 14. Vain Man w^old be Wise, tho' he be Born like a wild Asses Colt. If thou prepare thy Heart and stretch forth thy Hands

An engaged Heart for God,

towards him, if Iniquity be in thy Hand, put it far away, and let not Wickedness dwell in thy Tabernacles. The blessed Effects whereof you have in the 15th Vers. For then shalt thou lift up thy Face without Spot, yea, thou shalt be steadfast and shalt not fear. To the same purpose, the Lord calls on Israel by the Prophet saying, cast away from you all your Iniquities and make you a new Heart, and a new Spirit. Which must be done, or we shall never do any thing in God's Worshipp to any good Purpose, and the best Way of doing this, that I know of is.

Isai. 66.
2.

1st. By humbling our selves before the Lord, lamenting and bewailing the pravity of our Nature, and Corruption of our Hearts would we but busy our selves with our own Hearts, so as to get an understanding of them, surely we could not behold them (on a right and serious Reflection) stuff full of Crawling Vermin, of defiling Lusts, and not be humbled. Especially if we Consider, that to lie very low under the Sense of our defilement by Sin, is the only sure way thro' Christ of drawing out Gods Favour towards us, and of rendering our selves, the Objects he will delight to behold. For to that Man will I look. To what Man? is it the Rich, the Honourable, the Wise, the Noble the great or the Valiant,? No, But to him that is of an humble and Contrite Spirit, and that trembleth at my Words.

2^{dly}. Withdraw your Love and Affection from Sin, and let that be the only Object of your hate and Indignation, resolve upon the destruction of it, by Mortifying every Member thereof, for tho' in times past, We have walked in them according to the manner of this World, and have been Foolish disobedient deceived, serving divers Lusts and pleasures, living in Malice and Envy, hateful, and hating one another Yet now, abandon every evil habit and Sinful Practice, put 'em of as an old tatter'd and Filthy Garment, which St. Paul earnestly perswades the Christians at Coloss. unto. And St. Peter.

Peter. I beseech you dearly beloved, that ye abstain from *Fleshly Lusts, which War and Fight against the Soul.* Do not cherish 'em but cut 'em down, give 'em no Quarter, and with the Apostle keep under the Body, and bring it into Subjection. Which is both the Property and Practice of a true Christian. For they that are Christs, have Crucify'd the Flesh with the Affections and Lust. But perhaps you may say, Alas, what can we do, we are so debilitated and weakened by Sin and long Custom in it, that we can do nothing. Why then.

3dly. Call in the Aids of Heaven for your Assistance, pray earnestly to God, for he who is Almighty has promis'd, Power to them who have no might, and strength to them that wait upon him, that they Faint not. By devine Aids, the poor weak Soul shall be enabled to Surmount all difficulties, God, and his Creature humbled for Sin, and resolved against it, can do any thing, yea, every thing. By the abounding of Grace, Sin shall be so weakened, as not to rule in, nor Reign over us. But.

Secondly. An engaged heart for God in Duty, imports, a getting 'em Sanctify'd and furnish'd with what may adorn and make 'em meet for God, to whom we approach. This Israel was called upon to do, on every great and solemn Service they had to do with him in. When they were to draw near to the Mount to hear his Voice and receive the Law from his Mouth, he charges Moses first to go down and Sanctifie the People. Which accordingly he did. Also when the Levites were to bring the Ark to the place prepar'd for it, Davids charge to them was, that they Sanctify'd themselves, and good Hezekiah upon his restoring Religion and Proclaiming a Passover to be kept on a certain day; yet we read the Priest's could not keep it on that day, as they were not sufficiently sanctify'd, and a Multitude of the People who kept it, did by their defective Preparations, give that Religious Prince occasion of Interceding with God, That he would

Pa don

2. Cro. 30. 2. 18. *Pardon them who were not Cleansed according to the Purification of the Sanctuary.* 'Tis certain unhal-
 lowed Souls, can never please a holy God. There-
 fore Sanctifie your Hearts. That is, having Sepe-
 rated 'em from all Sin by humiliation, and a fixed
 Resolution against it, wash by Faith in the Blood
 of Christ, which alone hath Virtue to *Cleanse from*
 1. Joh. 1. 7. *all Sin*, which done, offer 'em up to God, Pray-
 ing him to Furnish 'em with Holy dispositions
 even the Graces of his own Spirit, which will a-
 dorn, and render 'em meet Habitations for him-
 self. You know, when Men remove to a new
 House and Dwelling, they furnish it at their own
 Charge, and with their own Goods, much more
 will God furnish the Heart seperated from all Sin,
 sanctify'd and offer'd up to him for an Habitation
 to dwell in; instead of Malice, Hatred, Wrath,
 and the like; He will adorn it with *Love, Joy,*
Peace, long Sufferings, Goodness, Faith, Meekness,
Temperance, &c. against which there is no Law.
 Those have much to do with God, that would en-
 gage their Hearts for him in Duty. Therefore
 pray earnestly that he would increase your Faith,
 and that all the Applications of the Word, Blood,
 and Spirit of Christ, may be effectual for your
 Sanctification, and Holyness. Do all that ever
 you can for this Purpose, but then, be sure you do
 Levit. 22 19. *your All as Dependants on him: For when all is*
 done, it is God (tho' in the Use of Means) *that*
 Joh. 17 1 *sanctifies his People.*

Thirdly, An engaged Heart for God, in Duty,
 imports, not only a getting them quality'd for,
 but also, a fixing them upon him, and that for e-
 ver, like that Servant under the Law, *who loving*
 Ex. 21 6 *his Master, consented he should bore his Ear before*
the Judges, whereby he declared he would be his
Master's for ever. And who so fit to fix our
 Hearts upon as God, the Object of our Worship,
 and the Happiness of our Souls. This was Da-
 vid's Care and Practice, who says, *My Heart is*
fixed

fixed, O God, my Heart is fixed. He doubles it, denoting thereby the Truth and Certainty of the Thing: And that it was fixed upon God is evident, as he accounts him the whole of his Happiness; and therefore prefers him to all in Heaven and Earth: And when in his Exile he had lost (as it were) all Sight and Sense of him, how passionately does he exert himself, as one desirous of nothing but his God. *Psal* 63. 2, 3. And when blest with an Enjoyment of him, his dreading not any Thing more than an Interruption of his Communion, who prays, that God would not suffer him at any Time to wander from his Commandments. The Heart (as some say, and more do experience) is hard to fix. Nothing more apt to rove and ramble than the Hearts of Men: Of them it may be said, as of the Eyes of a Fool, that they are in the Ends of the Earth: Whilst Men are unsettled and undetermined they waver and fluctuate; they turn this Way, and that Way as Interest or Humour inclines, like as the Wind doth the Weather-Cock; for this the Lord complains against *Israel*, who notwithstanding their many Resolutions to serve him, they often broke Covenant with him, basely deserted him, and turned to Idols: And the Reason of it was, the Lightness and Fickleness of their Spirits under the Ties of his great Goodness in redeeming them from Evils, and loading them with his Benefits: They made high Professions of Love to him, but all was Pretension, and no more, for their Hearts were not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his Covenant; on which Account the Lord interprets all their Professions to be no other then Flattery and Lying. Had their Hearts been fixed, they would have been more steady in their Spirits, and more immovable in his Service. Thus we have shew'd you, what an engaging the Heart to God imports. I proceed in the

Second Place, To assign the Grounds and Causes, why so many, who worship God, do approach him without

Psa. 57. 7.

73. 27. 1.

44. 19.

119. 10.

Pro. 17.

17.

Psa. 78.

8. 36. 37.

Ver.

without engaged Hearts for him in Duty, of which Sort the World in all Ages afforded Instances too many; and I could wish the Age we liv'd in did not: But considering the great Numbers of careless, sleepy, formal and hypocritical Worshipers, that appear almost in every Assembly, we may take it for granted, it is now no more strange and unusual, than in Days past, for Persons to come before the Lord with Hearts unengaged for him: We

Isai. 58. 2: may approach him with some Kind of Delight, may enquire after his Ordinances, be strict Observers of the Forms and Modes of Religion,

Mat. 15. 8, 9 we may confess him with our Mouths, and honour him with our Lips, which, with the Elevation of our Hands and Eyes, may be enough to perswade Beholders to fancy we are entirely devoted to God, when as all this, without a prepared and fixed Heart, will be of no more Value with God, than of old *the Skin of the Sacrifice was without the Fat*, or the Service of an Hypocrite now is. Well since it is so, pray for what Reason does it come to pass that Men so generally neglect a Thing so necessary, as the engaging their Heart for God in Duty is, among many I will name the Four following, and the 1st. is false and unworthy Notions of God, if Men can once arrive at such a Pitch of Atheism, as with the Fool to fancy *there is no God*: Or that

Pf. 14. 1. if there be a God, he is *but like the Idols of the Nations, who have Eyes but see not, and Ears but hear not*. As the Ancients of Israel, whose Hearts were upon their Idols, and said, *the Lord seeth us not, the Lord hath forsaken the Earth*: Or those who basely concluded, *God to be altogether such a one as themselves*, likes them, and what they like, interpreting his long Suffering, and the Restraints of his Anger, from a just and severe punishing their Impieties, as an Argument that he loves them, and what they love; whereupon they, thro' the Reins upon the Neck of their Lusts, set their Heart upon their Vanities, will not be stopt in their wicked

Courses

his Pleasure and our Profit.

Courses, but do grow and increase unto more *godliness*, as the wise Solomon tells us, *Because Judgment is not speedily executed against an evil Work, therefore the Hearts of the Children of Men, are fully set in them to do Evil.* A

2d. Ground and Cause of this defect is, the weaknels of our love to God and Religion, if once Indifferency cease us, it will mightily cool our Zeal, abate our Vigour and render all pain taking with our hearts needless. A weak Affection will not make us Violent in any thing, therefore the Measure in which we should love the Lord as our Saviour teacheth, is, *with all the Heart, Soul, mind, and Strength.* Did we so love God, the Heart would be in a perpetual Motion, and never rest till fixed upon him, like the Needle of a Compass that Waves too and fro' till it points to the North, and then it rests, a strong Affection regards neither Difficulty nor Danger, and will render Pain and Labour a real pleasure to the loving and Loyal Soul, such value noteither theSmiles or Frowns the promises or threats of any, so, as to be drawn or driven from Work and Duty, they will go on with the Work of Religion, let the Irreligious say and do what they please, like good Nehemiah, who building the Wall of Jerusalem was sent to by Sanballat, and his Companions that were Enemies both to him and his Work, *come say they let us meet together in one of the Villages of the Plain of Ono.* Whether this meeting and Interview they desired was Intended and proposed for a mutual Entertainment and Repast, Or to consult of things which related to the Honour and Interest of their Lord the King, Or what else is not said. But what says Nehemiah to this Message. O says he, *I am doing a great Work, so that I cannot come down, why should the Work cease whilst I leave it, and come down to you.* They repeat their Message time after time, and he returns 'em Answer after the same manner. To the same purpose you have holy Paul speaking

2. Cor.
5. 14.

Speaking. *The love of Christ constrain me, q. d. let not the World wonder, that I am so unconcern'd about the thing of the Earth, and with so much Zeal and Vigour engaged and concern'd to promote the Interest of Religion and Christianity in the World, for I am under the constraining Force and Power of Christs Love, which enclines yea, compels me thereto.* But on the other Hand, a Feeble love makes a fickle Heart, and may not God for infinitely better Reason demand of you, then Dalilah of Sampson, *How canst thou say I love thee, when thy Heart is not with me.* The Daughters of Jerusalem were unrelolved for Christ until their Hearts Flamed with Love to him, but then they came to a Point, which was to seek and serve him. But a

Judg. 16.
15.

3d Ground and Cause of this Neglect, is, Earthly mindedness, our Hearts like wanton Virgins will go away with one Lover or other, if God hath them not, who is infinitely worthy of them, the World will, by proposing things which carnal Hearts imagine to be more Suitable sweet and gustful than what the Severe exercises of Religion presents 'em with. The Riches, Honours, and Pleasures of the World loved (otherwise than in Subordination to him) is enmity against God, and sets us

Jam. 4. 4.

at a mighty distance from him. While the Soul is in quest of, *and Pants after the Dust of the Earth,* it can never perform the Service of God in a steady and pleasing manner nor can he have any Regard to, or value for the most solemn Professions of Love, while the Heart is fixed on, or gadding after the World. Therefore says Paul to the

Ezek. 33.
31.

Christians at Coloss, *set your Affections on things above, and not on things on the Earth.* And our blessed Saviour, *Lay not up for your selves Treasures upon the Earth, where Moth and Rust doth Corrupt, and where Thieves break through and Steal. But lay up for your selves Treasures in Heaven, where neither Moth and Rust doth Corrupt, and where Thieves, do not break through and Steal.* And this he presses on them

Col. 3.
1, 2.

by

by a very cogent Reason, saying, *For where your Treasure is, there will your Hearts be also.* Math. 6. 19. 20. 21. So that its very plain, what ever a Mans heart is upon, that is his Treasure, whether it be God or the World and of the World it may be truly said as the Prophet doth of *Whoredom, Wine and new Wine, that it taketh away the Heart.* Hos. 4 11. The.

4th and last Cause I shall assign, why Men do not engage their Hearts for God in Duty, is, a secret Fancy that all this ado, is more than needs, and that less ado may serve turn, Men generally look upon all this Inward Work and Pain taking with the Heart to be nothing else but the doting Whims of Frantick Fanaticks, and mere Enthusiasts, who, say they, take Pleasure in being too Officious with an affected Cant to disturb and trouble their Neighbours Quarters. If this heart Work were easy, they Imagine it Superfluous, for does not their Practice plainly speak in the Language of Judas, *What needs all this Waste* when the Ointment was poured on our Blessed Saviour, might not this have been sold for three hundred Pence and given to the Poor. So say some may not our time and Pains be Spent rather for other Purposes, as the minding of Business, making Provision for an Evil day, and raising Fortunes for Children. God is not so Severe as you talk of, He loves Mercy rather than Sacrifice, well in some cases he does so, as when it is out of a Mans Power to Sacrifice, or when Men lay too much stress on, and trust in their Sacrifices and the like. But then let such careless and Idle Dreamers consider, whether it's possible that God can delight in seeing himself so generally neglected and slighted by us, in preferring our own Interest and pleasing our selves, to his Interest, and a pleasing of him. Or as when we come reeking hot out of the World in an Overt Careless manner into his Presence without a Prepared and engaged Heart for him, which is the only thing

An engaged Heart for God

thing he Values in the Duties we perform before him. Besides do not some with pleasure, Wash and drels themselves and spare no Pains, will not have a Pin amiss, when they come into the Congregation to be seen of Men, (as indeed it is fit they should appear there in the most decent manner they can) But then should we not much more wash and prepare our Hearts for God, when in the Duties of his Worship we come and put ourselves under the Cognizance and view of his pure Eye. Yea, however Men Imagine the contrary. Because it is as truly his delight and pleasure, as our Duty and Interest to engage our Hearts to approach unto him. Which brings me to the.

Third Thing in the Method propos'd which is to evince that an engaged Heart for God in Duty is delightful to him, and the Duty and Interest of every one of us. That it is a Delight and Pleasure to God, will appear, if we consider,

That he prefers such a Heart, and accounts of it above all external Acts of Worship which can possibly be perform'd unto him without it. Painful Services, costly Sacrifices, and pompous Solemnities, are no way delightful to him, if not attended with Sincerity of Heart, as we have already prov'd: Next to Christ, a Heart for God is all in all, and our all without it is nothing at all; and this is attested by the Royal Prophet in his Penitential Psalm, where he is speaking to God thus, *Thou desirest not Sacrifice else would I give it, thou delightest not in Burnt Offerings. The Sacrifices of God are a broken Spirit a broken and contrite Heart. O God thou wilt not despise.* No, but on the contrary he will accept it, as it is the Object of his Delight: Sacrifices and Services are nothing without it, but that in it self is a Sacrifice acceptable and well pleasing to him; which farther appears

As a prepared and engaged Heart for God is what he hath determin'd to reside and dwell in: He hath chosen it for an Habitation. The Places

where

where Men reside most, are those they delight in, and not those in which they have no Pleasure. Even so God, next to Heaven, hath chosen the humble Heart for himself: He will not only look to the Man that hath it with Favour and Acceptation, but he will cohabit with, and dwell in them: *For thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth Eternity: I dwell in the high and holy Place, and with him also that is of a contrite and humble Spirit, to revive the Spirit of them, and to revive the Heart of the contrite ones.* He will grant such his Presence, his powerful Presence, to conquer and vanquish all their Enemies; Pride, Lust, Sin and the Devil; his gracious Presence to help and assist them in all their Duties; his reviving and consolating Presence, to quicken them under all their Deadness, and to comfort them under all their Sadnesses. What Good can such want, who have Goodness it self thus present with them? who, in the Type and Shadow of Things have Heaven upon Earth: For it is God's Presence only that makes Heaven: And since God will be present with humble and holy Souls, 'tis very plain, that he hath a Delight and Pleasure in them.

Which is further evident, As a prepared Heart for God, is the great Design he intends to advance by all that Grace he bestows upon us, *i. e. To renew us in the Spirit of our Minds*, to make us holy and therein conformable to himself: For all Degrees of Sanctification which Man can possibly attain to, while the Heart remains filthy and unpurg'd of its earthly and corrupt Affections, is no more than what is common to Hypocrites: *The Inside of the Vessel must be made clean, as well as the Out-side*; the Heart must be cleansed and renew'd as well as the Life, else we shall never be like him who is Holiness it self, and hath bestow'd Treasures of Grace to make us holy. Therefore as a Heart sanctify'd and engaged for God is the Effect of his Grace, whereby we are restored in some Measure to our original

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original Excellency, even so God, who delights in himself, as all Perfection resides in him, must needs delight in holy Souls, as they are his Workmanship, wrought up in his own Likeness; and tho' as yet, it be but a very weak and faint Image of himself that we bear, he will by his Grace carry it on in us, that growing up under the Influence of Grace to a perfect Stature of Manhood in Christ, *we may awake in his Likeness.*

In fine, it must needs be, that God takes Delight and Pleasure in Persons whose Hearts are engaged for, and fixed on himself, from the Dignity and Honour he will advance them to; such shall be privileg'd above all others, in that he will take them to be his peculiar People; such shall have a sure Security, and never-failing Happyness in that he himself will be their God: For so the Promise in the Words run, *Who is this that engageth his Heart to approach unto me, saith the Lord; and ye shall be my People, and I will be your God.* Therefore it may be said of such, as Hamond of Mordecai; these are the Men whom the King delighteth to honour.

Thus without enlarging, we have prov'd, That engaged Hearts for God are his Delight and Pleasure, it remains now, that we prove it both the Duty and Interest of every one of us, thus to prepare and engage our Hearts for him, and this we shall do by these Six Reasons, taken *First* from the Command of God. *Secondly*, from his Nature and Worship. *Thirdly*, From the differing Sentiments he hath upon our engaging, or not engaging our Hearts for him. *Fourthly*, From the Necessity of the Thing. *Fifthly*, From the Utility of it. And *Sixthly*, From the Insignificancy of our Approaches to him, without it. But

First, It is our undoubted Duty from the Command of God, If there be Reason we should hearken to the Commands of any, then much more to the Commands

Commands of God, who hath both Will and Power to reward our Obedience, or to ruin us upon our Contempt of, and refusing to offer him freely what he requires and calls for, which is our Heart. *My Son give me thy Heart*; not lend, but give it to me; not sell, but give it me; give it me whole and entire. Say not as the false Mother of the Child did to the true, *Let it be neither thine nor mine*; but let it be divided. In this Respect *Israel* was found faulty; their Heart was divided. Give me thy Heart not rude and filthy, but wash'd and made clean, this he earnestly desir'd, *O Jerusalem wash thy Heart from Wickedness: that thou may'st be saved*: How long shall vain Thoughts lodge within thee? And not only wash'd, but furnish'd with holy and heavenly Dispositions, and thereby made meet for him, otherwise we give him not that which he calls for, and we cannot withhold that from him, but at our Peril, since by Sovereign Command it is made our Duty. Which further appears,

Secondly, From his Nature and Worship. He is a Spirit, a pure, powerful, and all-knowing Spirit, who hath made us Flesh and Spirit, and to consist of Soul and Body: And can we think it agreeable to him who is a Spirit that we should serve him with our Bodies and Flesh, while our Spirits or Souls are with-held from him, and are gadding after and doting on other Objects: This can be no more pleasing to him, than if we forced our Brutes into his Sanctuary, where the bleating of the Sheep, and lowing of the Oxen would be. Wherefore our Blessed Saviour tells us, *That God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in Spirit and in Truth*; else there can be no Suitableness in the Subject to God, who is the Object of our Worship. This is also evident from his Power and Greatness: The greater any Person is, the greater is the Reverence that is due; And this is the very Argument the Lord himself uses with *Israel*, *Mal. i. xiv.* where he denounces a Curse upon the Deceiver

An engaged Heart for God.

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9. Lord God of his Father, but to serve him with a per-
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Joh. 4. 23 done in, or with our Spirit : For such only the Fa-
Rom. 12. then seeks to worship him : That is, he regards and
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formers of 'em; like the proud *Pharisee* who in his Arrogance set himself above the Rank of other Men, and boasted of his Performances, *I go to Prayers, I fast, I give Alms, Yea, I give Tythe of all I poss. ss.* These Things in their Places are well, and what ought to be done; but if done without a Heart for God, they are no better in his Sight than an abominable Thing: He accounts of such Duties as nothing, which is intimated by the Prophet, *There is none that calleth upon thy Name, that stirreth up himself to take hold on thee.* Doubtless many Prayers and pompous Services did *Israel* direct unto the Lord, which he in some Sense owns in the 5th of *Amos*, 22d Verse. Yet, for their Insincerity, he explodes and rejects them; Yea, he seems to deny that they offered Sacrifices unto him. Verse 25th, *If they did, they did it not heartily, but hypocritically, which spoil'd the Duty.*

And as it is necessary to the Being, so it is, to the Success and Prosperity of a Duty. It is sad to think what a deal of Fruitless Service is perform'd and that with a great Shew and Solemnity too, and the Reason is the Absence of their Hearts therein. For to do what we do with a Heart for God is the only way to Succeed, this Course the Lord propos'd to *Israel* by *Jeremiah* ye shall seek me and find me. i.e. *I will turn away your Captivity will gather you from among the Nations, and I will bring you again to the Place from whence I caused you, to be carry'd away Captive.* But when will God be found by them, thus to bleis them? why when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And as the Lord proposes this Course for so happy an End, so, such as have try'd the Experiment ever found it successful, as *David* 1. *Sam.* 18. 5. and 14. *Asa.* 2. *Cron.* 14. 7. And *Hezekiah.* Who in every Work he begun to do in the Service of the House of God, he did with all his Heart and prosper'd. 2. *Cron.* 31. 21. The.

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Thing, and of this we may say as the Apostle
 1. Tim. 4. *Speaks of Godliness, That it is Profitable to all
 Things, having the Promise of the Life that now is, and
 of that which is to come.* Many and great are the
 Advantages that will accrue unto us by a Heart
 engaged for God. Of which I shall name 2
 or 3. *First.* It makes the Soul so intent on God
 and his Service, as to Guard and Fortifie it against
 Sin and the Devil. The Devil with all his Wiles
 and Sin with all it's Charms will no more prevail
 with a Soul fixt on God, than *Samballat* did on
Nehemiah, Satan never gets Advantage against a
 Pious Man or Woman, but when the Heart is un-
 hinged and Wandring from God, then we lie
 open to every Wind and every Temptation puts us
 into Danger. But while the Heart is engaged for
 and fixt on God and Duty. It is next to an Im-
 possibility that such should be Captivated by any
 Sinful Compliance. Such will repel the Tempter,
 by demanding as good *Joseph* did of his Aluring
 Mistress. *How can I do this great Wickedness and
 Sin against God* And it Yields us a Security against
 Enemies and Evils. So, *Secondly.* It will Com-
 fortably and Intallibly Evidence to us, our own
 Sincerity, to know our Selves to be no Hypocrites
 but sincere, will always yield us matter and Occa-
 sion of Joy and Triumph, as it is intimated by St
 Paul. *Our rejoycing is the Testimony of our Consci-
 ence that in Simplicity and Godly Sincerity we have
 had our Conversation in the World.* 'Tis Confess-
 many may approach God with Pomp and Ceremo-
 ny where there is but little Sincerity, but where
 the latter is wanting the former will bespake Men
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 time Ch. 33. 31. 32. Verses. But as it will Secur-
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 So, *Thirdly.* It will entitle us to, and Qualifie
 us for an Advancement to the greatest Dignity and
 Honour we are capable of on this side Heaven
 Nay, to the happiness of Heaven it self. In the

Gen. 39.
9.

2. Cor. 1.
12.

the Lord upon engaging our Hearts for him, will take us to be his People, and he himself will be our God Mat. 19. 8. 9.
But.

Sixthly and Lastly. This is further evident from the Insignificancy of all our approaches to God without it, since our Lord Jesus tells us, that such who draw near to him with their Mouth, and Honour him with their Lips, when their Hearts are far from him, do at best but lose their Labour, worship him in vain, and to no Purpose. I now conclude with a few Reflections on the whole. And

First, It informs us of the supreme Excellency of God, whose Nature is such, that we cannot serve him in any Duty acceptably without the Heart be engaged for him therein; and that the Judgment he makes of Persons and Things is vastly different from that of Men. St. Paul, tho' 1. Cor. 10. 1. none like him in the Account of God, yet was mean and base in the Judgment of Men: So, when the Prophet was sent to the House of Jesse, to choose for the Lord a King over Israel, Eliab passes by before him, whose Countenance, Stature, and other Things which appear'd inclin'd the Prophet to imagine, That the Lord's Anointed was before him; but the Lord to rectify his Mistake, bids him not to judge according to the outward Appearance, 1 Sam. 16. 7. Then Jesse made all his Sons to pass before the Prophet, but David his youngest Son, of whom they made no great Account, who was in the Fields keeping the Sheep: But David is sent for, and fixed upon, tho' most unlikely and mean in Appearance; yet he was the Man after God's own Heart. So many in their Approaches to God, may in Gifts and human Acquirements be taller than others by Head or Shoulders, may minister before him, with great Art and Formality, insomuch, that almost all may judge from Appearance, that these are the Men in whom the Lord has Pleasure, and that to dissent from such is Fanaticism all over; I say, Men may judge from the

Luk. 16.
15.

the Appearance of Things, and as they know not the Heart of others, they have no other Rule to judge by, but by what appears: But the Rule by which the Lord judges of Men, and their Services, is their Heart, which made our Lord to tell the *Pharisees*, notwithstanding the seeming Seriousness of their Address, and Pomp of their Solemnities, which might draw the Eyes of almost all unto them, *That that which is highly esteem'd amongst Men is Abomination in the Sight of God.*

Secondly, It informs us that Religion is not only an outward, but an inward Thing; a Work and Business to be manag'd with the greatest Intenseness of Mind, as there is in a Man a Body and Soul, so, in Religion; the Religion of the Body, is but the Body of Religion; but the Religion of the Heart, is the Heart of Religion: And this *St Paul* subscribes to, telling us, *Rom. 2. 28, 29* That he is not a Jew that is one outwardly, but he is a Jew that is one inwardly, and Circumcision is that of the Heart, in the Spirit, whose Praise is not of Men, but of God.

Thirdly, May not this serve to humble us upon Reflection, that in our frequent and religious Approaches to God, we have been so remiss and careless about the Frame of our Spirits, have taken so little Pains with our Hearts to get them prepared for and fixed upon God by Meditation and Prayer; especially if we consider by what base Trifles the generality are hindred from a Thing so requisite as preparing the Heart for God is. Are not many Hundreds on a Lord's Day, by Love to their Bed in a Morning, others by carking for their Bellies, others by dressing and adorning their Bodies, and others by gratifying one base Lust or other, as Piping, Potting, casting up Accounts, walking in the Fields and the like; as if pleasing of the Flesh was the whole of their Business. And that which may further our Humiliation is, That if any Time we brought our Hearts with us, how

ickle and treacherous have they been? How soon have they given us the Slip, taking their Vagaries after Sin and the World? May not both God and we complain of them, as wavering and unstable; and say, (as in another Case) *They have dealt deceitfully, as the Waters of a Brook, which glide away.* We may give him fine Words, and may hear his Word as a very lovely Song, yet, may he not charge us, as he did Israel, *Psal. 78. 8, 10. They set not their Hearts aright, their Spirits were not stedfast with God, as they kept not his Covenant, but refused to walk in his Ways.*

But perhaps you may say, You hope better Things, and that you are not so mindless of God and your Hearts in Duty, as is talked of: Why then, let us put our selves on the Tryal, and make a serious and strict Search and Enquiry; for to err in this, is to be mistaken in a Thing (as you have heard) of the greatest Moment. Therefore know, a Soul resolv'd and engag'd for God, does

(1.) Conceive in him such an Excellency as by far transcends all that we can find in all other Persons and Things without him, so, as to make him the Object of our Love, and to account of him as the only Centre and Happiness of our Souls. Such will prefer him above all, and without Scruple can say with the Psalmist, *That there is none in Heaven but God, and none on Earth they desire besides him.* God is the whole of their Desire; God in every Thing, or God without any Thing, is the Language of a Holy Soul.

(2.) Such will gladly lay hold on all Opportunities for serving and glorifying of him, and more especially to enjoy him: They account not his Service tedious and troublesome, like thole who said, *When will the New Moons and Sabbath be gone? And what a Weariness it is to serve the Lord?* This is the Language of such only whose Heart is not with him. Common Experience tells us, Men are seldom weary of that which is agreeable with the Frame

Frame and Temper of the Mind. Is the Drunkard weary of his Bottle, the covetous Man of his Wealth, or the voluptuous Man of his Pleasures? No: Neither is the Pious Man weary of his God and Service, but pleas'd therewith in the highest Degree. *Christ delighted to do his Will: And David was glad when he saw People flocking to the House of the Lord, and had Opportunities of going with them; and being ravish'd with the Beauties thereof, he resolves to abide and dwell there all the Days of his Life.*

Ps 40. 8.
122. 1.
23. 6.

(3.) There is not any Thing so grievous and afflicting to a Soul resolv'd for God, as the withdrawing and hiding of his Face, those Seasons wherein her Communion with him is interrupted, of all others are long and tedious, dark and gloomy, stormy and tempestuous: From thence comes Distress and Fear, *Thou didst hide thy Face (says David) and I was troubled.* What could not his Crown and Royalties, the Glories of a Kingdom, the Airs and Ceremonies of his Nobles, his abundant Wealth and Treasure relieve him against Trouble? No, If the Lord *hides his Face* those Things will not do it; which made him often to cry out in such Terms as these, *Be not far from me O Lord: O When shall I come and appear before thee: When wilt thou come unto me, and restore unto me the Joys of thy Salvation, that the Bones which thou hast broken may rejoyce.*

57 B 12.

(4.) Souls resolved and engaged for the Lord are uniform in their Obedience, and all of a Piece, no less devout in their Family and Closet, then in the Assembly; as religious at Home as Abroad; always determin'd, not only to be really religious in our whole Converse with Men, but with Holy David, *to walk within our own House with a perfect Heart.* Thus we may try, and come to make a safe Judgment, whether our Hearts are right with God, or no.

I shall conclude all with a Word of Exhortation. And *First*, let such of us, as have taken little or

no Pains with our Hearts to engage 'em for God, be more painful and laborious to remove Wickedness from them, to sanctify and set 'em a-part for God: You have heard how necessary it is, and that without it *He will have no Pleasure in us, nor accept* Mal. 1. *an Offering at our Hands.* O therefore set up an Al-¹⁰tar in your Families, and with Pious Dispositions, in the Name of *Christ*, offer up unto him by Meditation and Prayer the Sacrifices of a broken and contrite Heart, and that he will accept.

And let such who have with those in our Text engaged their Hearts for the Lord, be watchful to keep them stedfast with him, lest they give us the Slip. You have been told it's pleasing to him, and very profitable to us: And shall not Interest move us? If we approach him with prepared Hearts, and in the Name of *Christ*, we may be sure of his Favour, and of receiving what we ask: And if we are so straiten'd in our selves that we cannot ask Things great enough, and good enough, we may, notwithstanding our own Shortness, be confident of enjoying the choicest Priviledge and highest Happiness, in that he will take us *to be his People*, and he himself *will be our God*, which is next to be considerd.





A S E R M O N,

Opening

The Properties and Privileges of God's People.

From

JEREMIAH xxx. xxii. *And ye shall be my People,
and I will be your God.*

HAVING treated on the Duty of engaging our Hearts to approach unto God, from the words before our Text, I now come to discourse the Advantage and Interest that will accrue unto the sincerely Pious Man and Woman thereupon from the Words we have read, where in we have the Lord saying to such, *That they shall be his People, and he will be their God.*

In the Words you have a very gracious Promise, whereby the Lord would encourage Persons to yield and devote themselves to the Duties of Religion and Godliness with the greatest Seriousness and Intensity of mind, for thereupon *ye shall be my People, and I will be your God.*

The first part of this Promise contains the Pious Mans Priviledge Dignity and Honour, *Ye shall be my People.* Enough sure to satisfy the largest desire of the most enlarged Soul in the World, there being no Priviledge and Honour like unto this, of being *Gods People.* In the second part of the Promise you have the Pious Mans Security and happiness, in that *the Lord will be his God.* Whatever Priviledge good Men may think of being entitled to, in the rank and relation of his People, and how high soever their Joy may mount on that

Account

Account, there is one thing that may add unto it, and that is the Security they shall have of their Priviledges; in that God *will be their God. i. e.* He will undertake for them, he will Interp^{se} himself and engage in their Favour, and if that be not enough, He will be their happiness and Felicity both here and for ever. For so much these Words, and *I will be your God*, Imports, as will hereafter appear, the Method we shall proceed in is.

First. We shall treat on the Dignity and Priviledge of God's People.

Secondly. We shall shew you, that the Lord being the God of his People, is not only sufficient for, but in realty is, both their security and happiness.

But to the first of these at this time, which is the Dignity and Priviledge of being God's People. And this flows purely from the supreme excellency of God. For, if in the Rank of Beings he is the first and best, and not only so, but the Fountain and sole cause of all other Beings, whether Angels in Heaven or Men on Earth, then by undeniable Consequence it follows, that the Honour of those whom he takes to be his People, does as far exceed the Honour of those whom Men and Monarchs take to be their Favourites, as God in Nature and Majesty transcends that of Crowned Heads on Earth. Yea, than those who are blest and possess'd with the most ample happiness the whole World can furnish them with. For the Psalmist pronounced them happy *who were in such a Case*. That is a very prosperous Condition, which he described in the 144 Psalm 13. 14 Verses, whose Sheep brought forth abundantly, whose Oxen were strong to Labour, and in whose Streets there was no complaining; Yet he confesses their happiness to be very mean, and inferior to that of being Gods People, as he adds in the 15th Vers. saying, *Yea happy, that is more truly and abundantly happy are they*

The Properties and Priviledges,

they whose God is the Lord. In speaking to this, we shall do these three things.

First. Enquire how, and in what respects a People may be said to be the Lords; and more specially so, in the sense of our Text.

Secondly. We shall lay open the Nature and Properties of the People of God whereby you will discern their Dignity and Excellency to be such, as will distinguish them from all other People on Earth.

Thirdly. We shall discover unto you some of the choice Priviledges common to all, who are in truth the People of God, and so conclude with a few Reflections. To the

First. Of these, a People may be said to be the Lords these six ways, and *first.* By Creation. He is the Author of our Beings which proclaims him our only rightful Proprietor, on this Account, Children who receive their Being from their Parents (tho' Parents are no more than Instrumental causes of their Being) are theirs only who begat, and brought them forth. Much more may God say of all Nations of Men, They are mine; I made them, which David Confesses in his Exhortation to the People of all Lands, grounding his Argument, whereby he would prevail with them to serve and praise the Lord, on the bare consideration of his being their Maker *For know ye that the Lord he is God, it is he that hath made us and not we our selves, we are his People and the Sheep of his Pasture.*

Ps. 100 3.

Mark, 'tis he that made us, and therefore we are his People, He is our rightful Lord, and no other ought, (nor can without Ulurpation) make claim to, or have Dominion over us. As we came out of the hand of our great Creator we were very happy, but by Transgression we became miserable and lost Creatures, for we by swerving, and breaking off from God, gave the Devil occasion to claim us as his own, and accordingly he hath led us Captive at his Will. But rather than God would

loose

loose the Glory of his Creation, he resolves in his Wisdom and Grace to recover a People for himself, by rescuing the Lump of lost Man, and therefore.

A People may be said to be the Lords by Redemption and Purchase. The Lord is pleas'd to own himself as standing in the relation of a Redeemer, and Saviour. *Thus saith the Lord your Redeemer &c. And besides me there is no Saviour.* And the People of God are frequently stil'd his, as they are Redeemed by him, says Zacharias. *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath Visited and Redeemed his People.* Now this Redemption which God hath wrought, is compleat and perfect on his part, as it was effected (1) By a Price of Infinite Value which was Paid, *not of Corruptable things as Silver, and Gold, but the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ.* His Blood was the Price of our Ransom. On this Account we are his purchased Possession, his, and none but his. *Ye are not your own, Ye are bought with a Price, therefore glorifie God with your Bodies and Spirits which are his.* (2) This Redemption he hath wrought by his Almightyness whereby he dash't in Pieces our Enemies, and by his Powerful Arm hath snatcht us Captives as a Prey from their Jaws, and deliver'd us from the Power and Dominion of Sin and Satan. Thus the Lord delivred Israel from Pharoah and the Egyptians. And thus we are Redeemed by the Victorious Encounters of our Lord Jesus Christ, when he brake the Head of the old Serpent, overcame Principalities and Powers making a shew of them openly upon the Cross. On both which Accounts we are truly said, to be delivered out of the Hands of all our Enemies. Now tho' we may say, as Israels Corporal Deliverance by Moses was for all that People. So this Spiritual Deliverance by Christ was for the whole World, as he by the Grace of God Tasted Death for every Man, and gave himself a ransom for all. But notwithstanding this, far are we from

E

supposing,

Isai. 43.

14.

Luc. 1.

6, 8.

1 Cor. 6,

20.

Luc. 1.

74.

Jo. 1, 19,

2 Jo. v 2,

Heb, 2,

9,

1 Tim 22,

6,

supposing that every individual Person shall be Saved by him. Tho he is truly stil'd *The Saviour of all Men* And tho' there be a Value in the Price Paid, sufficient for that Purpose, yet, they only (of Adult Sinners) who by Faith apply this Redemption to themselves in the Sense of their great need of it, and themselves to God as a People devoted to his Service under the Ties and Obligations of his Grace in Redeeming 'em to and for himself, such only are God's Redeemed People.

Again a People may be said to be the Lords by choice and Election, and on this Ground Israel in their Day was in a peculiar manner the People of God, as he singled them out of all the Nations of the World. *He chose them to be a People for himself, above or before any other whatsoever.* Thus Christ also tells his Disciples. *They had not Chosen him, but he had chosen them.* And St. Peter tells the Christians to whom he wrote, *That they were a chosen Generation.* And St. Paul to the Ephesians. *That he chose them in Christ before the Foundation of the World.* And the Thessalonians, *That they were chosen through Sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the Truth.* Thus you see God's People, are the People of his choice. And the People of this Character are Visible and manifest in the World; not they who without good Grounds fancy themselves to be the chosen of God, who can talk fondly; and with great Assurance of Election, as if they had been of the Lords Council, and admitted to know the Secrets of his Purpose, or who joyn themselves to a Community of this or that Character whereby they gain to themselves, a reputation among Men, and are entred into their Calender as being the chosen of God. But they only, who under the Sanctifying Influences of the Spirit are made holy, steadfast in their belief of the Truth, and Obeying the Gospel. They who maintain unblamableness in their whole behaviour, being Injurious to none, but do abound in Love, whereby

whereby they become Profitable to all so far as their Capacity will admit. These, I say are God's People, the People of his Choice, in Opposition to all others, how high so ever their Pretensions may be, if of a different Temper and Behaviour. But further,

A People may be said to be the Lords by compact and Covenant; which Covenant imports a mutual Agreement and Consent to certain Articles propos'd, for certain Ends and Purposes assign'd. That, to be done on God's Part, is, That he will of his own meer Mercy bless us, with all the Blessings of Grace here, and of Glory hereafter. And that which is to be observ'd and done on our Part is, in short, to believe what he says, and to do as he bids us, *i. e.* to repent, believe, and obey the Gospel, and this under the Influence of his own Grace. The Way in which this Compact or Covenant is carry'd on, is, God's free Donation, and giving himself by his Word and Promise to us, *to be our God*, to do all Things requisite to make us a holy and happy People; and on our Part a willing Surrender, and yielding up our selves to him, to be his, and that for ever. And then to ratify and confirm our Covenant with him by sacred Baptism, upon a solemn Profession of our Faith in Christ, as the Christians at *Macedonia* did, who first gave up themselves to God, and then unto his Church according to his Will: Not that we by any Thing on our Part, can merit the least from God; but by a constant and sincere Application of our selves to his Service, we are in the Way of obtaining his free Benedictions, as it is the only Way in which God will bestow the Blessings of his Grace here, and Glory hereafter upon his People. Neither is Man the first mover in this Compact; No, the first moving Party is God, who expressing the Freeness and Fullness of his ancient Love and good Will in Christ by the Gospel towards us, so intirely overcomes us thereby, wins us over to himself, and makes

2 Cor. 8,
5.

Ezek. 16.
8:

makes us willing Subscribers to his blessed Pleasure, as it did *Israel* of old, to whom the Lord said, *I swear unto thee, and entered into Covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine.* And who can possibly think of the charming Love and Grace of God in the Extent and Fulness of it, and not be prevailed with, relolving as in a Rapture (as the Spouse said to her Beloved) Lord, since thou art mine, I am, and will be thine. Also,

A People may be said to be the Lord's by Profession, whereby we openly own and acknowledge him to be our rightful Lord, our Ruler and Disposer. In Baptism we put on his Livery, and by a Christian Profession we renounce all other Lords, but God only: And as Men by the Liveries they wear, are known to be the Servants of such, and such noble Personages. So a Christian Profession bespeaks us to be Dependants on God, and Christ: But many who wear the richest Livery, and live upon the Bounty of their rightful Lords, are oft-times either idle in their Service, or wholly neglect it, to serve themselves: Nay, and which is worse, to carry on a wicked Conspiracy with their Lord's Enemies, to their Dishonour and Damage: And that when they are most loud and noisy in Professions of Love and Loyalty, they are most base and perfidious, like *Israel* of old, who would admit of no others of being the People of God than themselves; and Rabble-like were very noisy in their Declarations.

Jer. 7. 4.

The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, The Temple of the Lord are these. Here you have a mighty Profession they make of God, and that at a Time when they were in the highest Degree false to his Interest, had basely deserted his Service, given up themselves to their filthy Lusts, and to worship Idols, as appears on the Lord's demanding of 'em, *Will ye steal, murder, commit Adultery, and swear falsley, and burn Incense to Baal, and walk after other Gods whom ye know not, and come and stand be-*

Ver. 9.
10.

fore

fore me in this House, which is called by my Name, and say, we are deliver'd to do all these Abominations &c. This is doubtless an unsufferable Baseness, and what will not always be born with, which the Lord intimates to that People by calling them to consider, That he beholds and sees them. To run Ver. 11. around in Sin, under a Profession of being God's People, is what he will not always wink at; 'tis a Treachery our Blessed Saviour resents, and detects, in demanding of some who followed him in his Day, and of many more in this Day he might de- Luc. 6. mand, *Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the Things that I say.* If that would do, then Hypocrites, Drunkards, and prophane Persons, would stand as fare for Heaven, as the most mortify'd Christian in the Universe. But

Sixthly, And more especially, a People may be said to be the Lord's (in the Sense of our Text) by Preparation for, and an actual Resignation of themselves to him and his Service; that is what the Lord values and accounts of above all, without this, all the former Characters will not avail. *Israel* might have all the former, when Captives in *Babylon*: Might they not say, we are the Lord's People, as he made and created us; likewise by Redemption, by Election, by Stipulation, and by Profession; Yea, and we with Truth may be able to say as much, and for all that, may be but Satan's Captives, very Slaves and Vassals to Sin and our Lusts, if there be not a preparing for and an actual Surrender of our selves to God, which next to Christ, is what draws out his very Heart and Affection to us, engages him for us, and causes him with Rapture to say, *Who is this that hath engaged his Heart for me?* As if he had said, These are the Men and Women I have been looking for, that I love and delight in, whom I will take to be my People, and bless as such; even those who have yielded up themselves with prepared Hearts unto me. I now proceed in the

Second

Second Place to lay open the Nature and Properties of the People of God, wherein you will discern their Dignity and Excellency to be such, as will distinguish them from all other People on Earth. Confident I am, whoever they be, that they do not only differ from, but that it may be truly said of them as the Lord spake of Job, *That there is none like him in all the Earth*; which will appear from these Ten Things peculiar to them.

First, They are a new form'd People, or, as our Saviour Phrases it *Regenerate and Born again*. In which Birth they pass such a change under the Influence of the Word and Operation of the Spirit of God upon the Soul, as makes 'em in truth *new Creatures*. Tho' not new with respect to the matter they are made of, yet they are new with respect to the Frame and dispositions of the Mind. They vastly differ from what they were before, while under the old Creature Frame, then they were Carnal, but are now Spiritual, then of a ruffling and turbulent Temper, but now of a meek and quiet Spirit, formerly Proud and haughty, but now humble and lowly, then Cruel and Oppressive, but now Compassionate and Merciful. They are like God *who has Created and Form'd them a new in his own Image*. Likeness to God was Mans Crown and Excellency in his Original, but that was lost by Sin, tho' now restored by Grace, this is peculiar to Gods People, the special Mark and Character by which he knows 'em from others. *And as they have put of the Old Man with all his Deeds*. i. e. have abandon'd Sin in the evil Habits Practices of it, and *have put on the new Man* by an entire surrender of themselves to true Religion and Holiness whereby they distinguish themselves from others. This renewed from is the Prime and essential Badge of God's People. Many are his by Profession, but few, very few are such by Renovation: But tho' they are few comparatively, yet there are some, and whoever they be,

Col. 3.

10.

Eph. 4.

23. 24.

they

they live by other Principles, and Act for other ends, they then did before, or then others now do, who are not the People of God.

Secondly. They are a sensible and Understanding People. God in Creating them a new, has put them into a Capacity of Exercising their Spiritual Senses on Spiritual Things. That Brawny hardness and Stupidity we formerly Contracted by Sin is happily removed, and that Ignorance which Darkened the understanding is now Vanished before the bright Beams of the *Day sprung from on high, both Visited us tho' they were once in Darkness as well as others, yet now are they Light in the Lord.* Eph. 5. 8. But this knowledge peculiar to Gods People, is only in Spiritual Things, which the Natural Man (as such) cannot understand nor receive, he knows no more of them, than a Blind Man (who never saw) doth of Colours. 'Tis true for Natural Knowledge, or Knowledge in natural Things, other Men may be far Superior to the People of God, who are but Novices compar'd with many whose acquirements render 'em Masters of Arts and Science, and for their great Proficiency and Advancements in Literature are called Rabbi and Doctor, but for all this, Simple and illiterate Persons who know how to Mortify a Lust by the Spirit of God, and how to perform a Duty in the strength of Christ, knows more than they all, that are Ignorant thereof, who for all their Learning are as Ignorant as Nicodemus, a Master in Israel (and probably one of the Sanhedrim) appear'd to be, of the Nature and Necessity of Regeneration, by demanding of our Saviour, *whether a Man that is Old can enter a Second time into his Mothers Womb and be Born, and how can these things be.* John 3. 4. 9. Nay, they are not Ashamed to Boast of their Infidelity, by despising others more Obedient to the Laws of Heaven than themselves, as the Rulers and Pharisees those Masters of Knowledge and Learning did, in demanding of the Officers on their Receiving a good

Ch. 7. 48
49.

good Opinion of Christ, *Are ye also Deceived, have any of the Rulers or Pharisees believed on him* (if not the greater is there Sin) *but this People who know not the Law are Cursed.* Sad it is, that the Learned shou'd ever interpret Christ a deceiver; and those who receive and entertain him to be deceived. And whether his blessed Institutions and those who strictly observe and Practice them as they were deliver'd by himself and his Apostles, are not alike disrespectively treated now a Days, I leave to Consideration but evident it is, that these Masters of Knowledge revil'd arraign'd, Condemn'd, and Crucify'd the Son of God, while the more Plain and Unlearned believed on him. These know God in Christ, are tender of his Honour, sensibly afflicted, do Grieve and Mourn to see him dishonoured, whilst thole Learned Rabbies with others from their stupid and unbelieving Frame *did not know the Things that belong'd to their Peace.* But,

Psa: 119
136
Ezek. 9 4

Thirdly, They are a modest and humble People, the Timpany of Pride is now prick'd, how high and lofty soever they were in Times past under the Apprehension of their natural Excebcencies and Acquirements: 'Tis certain now, by the Illuminations of the Word and Spirit of God, they see that Sin and Vileness in themselves as prevents their vaunting, lays them low, and keeps them humble: Every Sight of God fills 'em with Abhorrence of themselves, the higher they mount in Service and Duty, the lower they sink in Humility from a Sense of their own Unworthiness: Tho' Paul could say he had in Point of Service and Sufferings *done more than all the Apostles, or more than any of all the Apostles:* Yet he confesses, *He was less than the least of all Saints.* As Humility endears a People to God, and renders them his Favourites, so he admits none into the Rank and Relation of his People who are destitute thereof, He,

1 Cor. 15
10.
Eph. 3 8

James 4 6

as the Apostle tells us, *Resisteth the Proud, but gives Grace to the Humble.* This is common to all his,

whatever

whatever their State and outward Condition in the World is, high or low ; for Men when Poor to be humble (at least in Shew and Appearance) is not strange, but to be really humble, under high Advancement and in a prosperous State is excellent. Thus it was with *David* that great and good Man, when exalted high, clad with Majesty, and set on *Israel's* Throne, does it make him proud ? O, No ; but the quite contrary, as you have him with the greatest Modesty breathing forth the humble Sentiment of his Soul, saying, *What am I Lord God, and what is my House, that thou hast brought me hitherto ?* And *St. Paul*, when he had summoned together the Elders of the Churches, he appeals to them, *after what Manner he had behav'd himself amongst them at all Seasons, and that he had serv'd the Lord with all Humility of Mind ;* Instances so bright as are well worthy to be intimated by Princes, Ministers, and every Man and Woman in the Christian World. But

Fourthly, They are an obedient and heavenly minded People ; they are inquisitive after nothing more, than what the Lord will have 'em to do, and when they know it, they are not disobedient to the Heavenly Vision ; but forthwith do what he requires, without regarding either the Difficulty or Danger of it, with *St. Paul*, *Gal. 1. xvi. xvii.* If men forbid us to do as God says, they will then conclude it meet (with *Peter* and *John*) to obey God rather than Man. They are not only oblig'd to, but resolv'd on a Course of Obedience and Holyness expressing both an outward and inward Conformity to the Will of God : As it is signify'd of the Christians at Rome, *God be thanked tho' we were the Servants of Sin, that ye have obey'd from the Heart that Form of Doctrine which was deliver'd you.* And less than this they cannot do, as they are an heavenly minded People, acting as like those in Heaven as ever they can, where the Will of God is done most perfectly without the least

1 Chron.

17. 16.

Acts, 20.

18. 19.

Ch: 5. 2.

G. 4. 18.

Rom. 6.

7.

Phil. 3. 19. 20. Regret and Interruption. And tho' there be many under a Profession of the Christian Religion fit to be reprov'd, as they *mind Earthly Things*, yet in Opposition to all such, the Apostle brings in himself and all true Christians, saying, *But our Conversation is in Heaven*; that is, we govern our selves by the Laws of Heaven, we act by Principles receiv'd from Heaven, and have Heaven in our Eye as our only Aim and End. A

Fifthly Property of God's People is, They are sincere and upright in all they transact with God and Man: In their Conversation with God they are not only religious in Shew, but really so; they look upon Religion as too sacred a Thing to be prostituted to, or employ'd for any base or hypocritical Purpose; as the appearing righteous to Men, rather than to be really and substantially aighteous; they do the lesser Things of the Law, but neglect not the weightier Matters of it. Their Care is not so much to seek the Praise of Men, as to approve themselves to God in every Part of his Worship and Service, faithfully discharging every Office and Trust reposed in them: Also in their Conversation with Men, their Sincerity is no less evident, as they are free and open in their Dealing without Reserve and hidden Designs of Couzenage and Fraud; they are punctual in performing of Promises, once made, tho' the making them good, may be to their Hurt; they value Reputation, and carefully improve all Opportunities for their own Advantage; but abhor, trick, and artifice, for advancing themselves upon the Ruin of, or by injuring others. Guile and Falshood, Deceit and Colusion are Aliens and Strangers in all their Dealings: They care not if a Window were opened, through which all Men might look into their Hearts, strictly to observe their Designs and Motions, being conscious to themselves, that all their Managements and Ends are no way unbecoming the People

People of God : Therefore they are justly stil'd by the Royal Prophet, *the Assembly of the Upright.*

Ps. 111. 1.

Sixthly, They are a kind and loving People, of all others the most cordial, and extensive in their Affections. They love God principally whose People they are, and account of none in Heaven or in Earth in Comparison of him : But tho' they love God above all, yet they love Men, not only as they are like 'emselfes, but in Subordination to Gods good Will and Pleasure. They love the Bretheren as they are Born of the same Father, Adopted into the same House and Family, are partakers of the same Spirit and Grace, and Heirs of the same Glory, and this they evince by Sympathizing with each other. *They rejoyce with them that rejoyce, and weep with them that Weep,* and can 2. Cor. 1. 29. say with holy Paul, *who is weak and I am not weak? who is offended and I burn not?* Also, they lovingly assist and help one another, the stronger supports the weaker, the richer relieves the poorer, and this not by Constraint, but willingly. They are not so contracted in themselves, but as they receive their all from the Love and Bounty of God, so they freely give, as they freely receive, whereby they become beneficial to all, but more especially to the poor Saints, which is not only a sweet Oudour among Men, but as the Apostle expresses it, *a Sacrifice Acceptable and well pleasing to God.* Phil. 4. Yea, they delight in the Society of each other, they are Birds of a Feather, *the excellent of the Earth.* Ps. 16. 3. And therefore the Company of their choice and delight. Nay, they do not only love their Friends, but their Enemies also, by doing them good Offices, and Praying for them, in a word, the whole World, is some way or other the better for them.

Seventhly. They are an Aspiring and growing People, two things sets this in a clear Light. *First.* their fervent Prayer to God, *Secondly* their Activity in Religion and Godliness. There is not any thing can

Ps. 114:
1. 2. 3.

can be interpreted a more certain Sign of Ignorance of God, and of secret Atheism, than a Non Praying unto him. *The Fool that saith in his heart, there is no God,* is described by the Royal Prophet to be *one that calls not on him.* And tho' Hypocrites and wicked Men may, and sometimes do go to Prayers, and call upon God rather than to incur the Scandal of being accounted Irreligious, and to obtain the applaus of Men as the Pharisees did. And more especially on the approach of Danger and trouble threatning 'em, then, *they will pour forth a Prayer unto him.* But this being the effect, rather of Education, Custom, or fear, than the genuine Fruit of knowing and loving God, may be Accounted by him, no other than detestable, as *the*

Pro. 15. 8. *Sacrifices of the Wicked are an Abomination.* But Gods People, i. e. every one renewed and quickened by the Grace and Spirit of God, will pray with Daniel, whatever is the Danger; with earnestness and Importunity as the Cananitish Woman, nay with Jacob *will Wrestle with,* take no denial, *nor let him go, until he hath blest 'em.* They know the Adoration of Prayer belongs to him, as the most excellent and supream Being. And from a sense of their own wants (too great to be supply'd by any other) they cannot but Pray. 'Tis as possible to find a living Man who breaths not, as a renew'd Man that Prays not. As Crying is the first Note of a living Child, so it is of one new born to God, which our Blessed Saviour Insinuates to *Ananias* concerning Saul after his Conversion whom he brings in very remarkably, laying, *Behold he Prays.* A clear Proof, that when God begins to change the Heart, then Man begins to Pray, and it is not Trifles they then Pray for, No, its for nothing less than the Blessings of Grace and Glory.

Acts. 9.
11.

And as they are very Aspiring, so they are no less Active in improving Grace obtain'd for their growing up in his likeness and Favour, they do not grow worse and worse, but better and better, for

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not being content with that Pitch of Holyness they have attain'd to, as it is far short of the Mark before them, which is the Perfection both of Holyness and Happyness: They are active and vigorous to reach every Day farther and farther, by pressing with St. Paul thro' Crowds of Enemies and Impediments towards the Mark: All their Emulation is to be more holy, knowing it well becomes them, to be like him whose People they are. But

Eighthly, They are a People pleas'd and satisfy'd in every Condition. I do not say fully and perfectly satisfy'd as they shall be, *when*, as David expresses it, *they awake in God's Likeness*: But they are so far pleas'd as to be kept from repining against, and from making any unworthy Constructions of God and his Providence towards them, as if he were unmindful of, or difficient in his Provisions for them. If God's People are rich and prosperous, they are as you have heard modest and humble, they do not much value themselves on that Account; Nor in Truth does Riches make any Man better, further than it makes 'em useful and beneficial to others. If they are poor and despised, they are satisfy'd, knowing it is their God that hath appointed their Bounds, and allotted to every one of them their Condition in this World; and, that he will not fail to give 'em what is needful to sustain 'em, till he takes them to the Inheritance he has in Reserve for them. They settle themselves in the stedfast Belief of this, which ravishes their Hearts, and enables 'em to say with the Apostle, *I have all, I abound, and am full, having* Phil. 4.
learn'd in whatsoever State I am therewith to be con- 12. 13.
tent. Nay, Heaven in their Eye will make 'em not only contented but joyful, tho' they suffer Spoile in the little they have. Nay more,

Ninthly, They are a Thankful and God-praising People: As all is of, and from him, so they ascribe the Praise and Glory of all to him. Not like the

King

King of *Assyria*, who in the Pride and Vanity of his Mind attributed his Riches, Successes and Victories to his own Prudence and Power; but like that holy Man *David*, together with his People, who said, *Thine O Lord is the Greatness and the Power, and the Glory, and the Victory, and the Majesty, for all is thine, &c. Both Riches and Honour come of thee, &c. Now therefore our God we thank thee and praise thy glorious Name, for all Things come of thee, &c. as Chron. 29. 11, 12, 13, 14.* But perhaps you may say, Here is Riches and Honour in good Store; no Wonder they celebrate God's Praises with Anthems, who had so abundantly replenished them with his Goodness. Why Sirs, the meanest of you, whom God hath taken into the Number of his Covenant People, are under far stronger Obligations thereunto, than all the Riches in the World with the Honours of it could lay upon you. Have you little in the World? Why then consider your great Dignity in being made the Sons and Daughters of the most high God, your Honour and Excellency in being made rich in Faith, One Dram of which, is more worth than the whole World; and not only so, but that you are Heir apparent of Heaven and Glory, which rightly apprehended, will fill us with Joy, and dispose, Yea, constrain us with more triumphant Shouts to cry *Grace, Grace*, than the People did in *Ezras* Time, when they saw the Foundation of their Temple laid. This is what the Lord would advance by all his Grace bestow'd upon his People: And this is the Property of their Soul, who say,

Ps. 115. 1. Not unto us O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy Name be all the Praise. Yea, this is what they are resolv'd upon, and that for ever. The

Tenth and last Thing I shall name as a Property of God's People is, They long to be with him: They know there is none like unto their God, as he is the Object of their Praises, and the only Centre and Rest of their Souls, therefore he is the whole

whole of their Desire. O Lord, says David, *my Soul followeth hard after thee.* Their Desire unto him, is, first in his Ordinances, where he has promis'd to meet 'em; but alas, the Enjoyment they have of him there, is very imperfect, and oft-times very short, which the Prophet aptly compares, *to the Way-faring Man who stayeth but a Night.* And therefore, Secondly, They desire to be with him ^{Jer. 14: 8:} in Heaven, where their Enjoyment of him will be both perfect and everlasting: Nothing shall come there to interrupt their Views of him, nor their Communion with him; and this reconciles them to Death itself, knowing that to be with him there, where there will be no clouding of his Countenance, nor hiding of his Face for ever, ^{Phil. 1. 23.} *will be best of all.*

Thus I have laid open unto you, the Nature and Properties of God's People, which discovers 'em to be a People for all true Worth and Excellency, like unto whom there is none in all the Earth, and this will appear as well from their Priviledges as their Properties, which I am now to give you some Account of, and in Number they are Ten answerable to their properties. And.

First, They are taken into Union with the Lord Jesus. Every one of God's People are by Faith one with Christ, of which they have a certain and infallible Proof as they are new Creatures: For the Apostle tells us, *That if any Man be in Christ he is a New Creature;* intimating, that they who are not new Creatures are not in him, and consequently none of his. Now by Union with Christ, I mean, a partaking of him in all that he is, and has, whereby, He, his Righteousness, his Strength, his Fulness, his Spirit, and his All is ours: We partake of his Nature, &c. of those Divine Qualities which make us conformable to him in Righteousness and true Holyness, and so are the undoubted Sons and Daughters of God. We are called by his Name, we partake of his Fulness, we share with him in his

The Properties and Priviledges

his Victories and Conquests, and thro^e him are made victorious our selves, 1 Cor. 15. 55. and Rom. 8. 37. In fine they partake of his Glory, of which they are joint Heirs with him. What so good? What so pleasant? What so honourable? Nay, what so blessed as Union with Christ?

Secondly, Their Sins are all pardoned, and their daily Weaknesses over look'd, which is a Ground of abundant Joy and Comfort to 'em, whatever their State and Condition is in the Body. As our blessed Saviour intimates to us, in that he says to the Sick

Mat. 8. 2. of the Paralytic, *Son be of good Cheer, thy Sins are forgiven thee.* And in this God deals with us as with Children it being the Property of a Father to pardon the Fault of his humbled Child. The Sweets that are convey'd to the believing Soul thereby is enough to put a pleasant Relish into every Cup, and to render every Distress on our Body tolerable. And this is what he would have all the Hearts of his People comforted with, who commissions his

Isiah. 40. 2. Ministers to tell 'em, *That their Warfare is accomplished, that their Iniquity is pardoned.* Yea, and from his innate Goodness, their daily Weaknesses are over-looked, of which the Prophet Michah is very expresse, saying, *Who is a God like unto thee, who pardoneth Iniquity* (but now mark) *and passeth by the*

Mich. 7. 18. *Transgressions of the Remnant of thy Heritage.* The every Christian is under the strongest Obligations not to sin, yet if we sin thro' Weakness and Infirmitie, as the best of Men do, in such Case God does not mark it, *for we have an Advocate with the Father, who pleads it off.* In this Respect, Gods People are priviledg'd above all others in the World. Other People must account for their many and mighty Sins; and that which is worse, they must suffer for them, if not happily prevented by timely and true Repentance: To such it may be

Jos. 24. 19. *said, as Joshua said to Israel in Case of Apostacy, The Lord will not forgive your Sins.* The

Third

Third Priviledge is Right and Freedom to the rich Provisions and pleasing Entertainment of God's House, where there is Bread of Life, and Water of Life, a *Feast of fat Things*, and Rivers of Pleasure to bath and solace the Soul in: There is also the best of Company with whom they shall enjoy the sweetest Communion, as they shall not only communicate with God's People, who, as we have told you, are the most excellent on Earth, but with God himself, who is the Glory and Happiness of Heaven, where his Praises are most perfectly and melodiously sung by blessed Angels. However he will not disdain to afford his People his Presence, to sit down with them at his Table, to manifest himself unto, and give them undoubted Pledges of his Love, which is better than Wine. And of this the Apostle John assures us, saying, *Our Fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ*; which Entertainment and Fellowship can never fail to ravish the Heart with Joy, of those who have it. But a

1 Johu 1.
2.

Fourth Priviledge is, Direction and Guidance in all their Ways, by which Means they are kept from all those Perils and Dangers they might (by straggling out of the Way) have fallen into: In this the Security of God's Israel of old lay, who went before them conducting 'em by a *Cloud by Day*, and a *Pillar of Fire by Night*. So in all Ages he took Care of them in this Particular, as he was their *Guide and Leader continually*. But more especially, he is so now, under the Gospel, as they have the Word of God, the Example of Christ, the Inhabitation of the Spirit, which our Lord told his Disciples should *guide them into all Truth*. The Spirit by its Inspirations, whispers (as it were) a pious Soul in the Ear whenever it's turning aside, saying, *This is the Way, walk in it*. So that God's People can scarcely be at a Loss by any meander or turning but by their own Default, and wilful Neglect, since there is such abundant Pro-

Isai. 54:
11.
Ch. 63.
14.

The Priviledges and Properties

vision made for their Conduct and safe Conveyance thro' this World, tho' it be fuller of Enemies and Dangers, than the perilous Wilderness was to Israel. A

Ihai. 33.
16.

Fifth, Is sure Protection in Times of Trouble and Danger. Every one of God's People do carry about 'em an invaluable Treasure, a precious and immortal Soul, and their Enemies lye lurking, with Design to way-lay, and plunder 'em thereof: *But the Munition of Rocks is their Defence.* Tho' Afflictions come one rolling in the Neck of another, sometimes from our own Demerits, as a just Rebuke of our Inadvertancies and Follies; sometimes from the Malice of the Devil and wicked Men, and sometimes from the Need we may stand in of them: Yet, God's People need not fear; for tho' their Troubles were as hot as Fire, the Lord knows how to qualify the Flame, and to save his People in the midst of them; which he shaddows out unto unto us, *by the Bush that burned, but was not consumed.* A lively Emblem of the Sufferings of God's People, and his powerful Protection. This Burning Bush was a strange Sight unto *Moses*. What shall not the combustible Braist of a Bush be consumed by Fire? No, if the Lord will make it a Sign of his Peoples Protection, it is strange; yea, and perhaps the Wicked will think it as strange, that the Godly are not wasted and worn out with the Troubles and Afflictions rais'd against them.

Pro. 18.
10.

Ihai. 27.
3.

Why, the Reason is, *God is their strong Tower and Defence:* He has undertaken for their Security, and he that has made 'em his Vineyard, will keep it, *that nothing hurt it by Night nor Day.*

Sixthly, Another Priviledge they have, and that is recovery from all their Mishaps. They may possibly stumble upon some of those stumbling Stones, which the Devil by his Temptations, the World by her Alurements, or our own Flesh do lay in our Way; but tho' they stumble they shall not fall, or if they fall, they shall not utterly be cast down:

down: No, the People we have described, shall rise again, as many have done by the devine Aids of Faith and Repentance. For God who orders the way of a good Man, and delights in his way, will be his Restorer, his own right Hand is underneath to uphold and Recover. *Psa. 37. 23 24. A*

Psa. 37.

4.

Seventh, is Access to, and Audience with God in all their Suites. Christ to whom they are united, and made one, is the great Master of requests. He takes all their Prayers and presents 'em in the Censer of his own worthiness, by Virtue of whose Incence, or Merrit, they are accepted and answer'd; and in him they have Boldness and Access with Confidence (or Assurance of speeding.) In the several Ages of the World, many strange Things have been asked, by, and granted to the People of God. Abraham asked a Son in his old Age, and God gave him one. Elisha ask'd a double Measure of Elija's Spirit, and tho' it was hard, yet he had it. Elias pray'd that it might not rain on the Earth for three Years and six Months, and it did not. Solomon asked for Wisdom, and he received it in a greater Measure, than it was ever given to any meer Man. By Prayer, Victories have been Won, and the edge of Enemies Swords been turn'd one against another. The Violence of Fire has been quenched; The mouths of Lyons have been stoped, the Dead have been raised: Nay, the Exploits and Archeivments by Prayer has not been inferior to those obtain'd by Faith. And so it will be, while the People of God frame their Prayes with Submission to his Will, and with an Eye to his Glory: For God, who delights in the Prayer of his People, He will hear thy Cry, he will grant their Requests; Yea, he will fulfill the Desires of their Hearts, and will save them.

Psal. 145.

19.

The *Eight*, Priviledge is, a profitable Fruit of all their Crosses. Losses shall be turned into Gain, as God will yield them Advantage from all afflicting Accidents that befall them on one Side or other.

The

Tho' God suffers 'em sometimes to be exercised with the Sense of Evils arising both from Sins and Pain by Reason whereof they Groan and Labour yet it is for very beneficial Ends, one is, *That Iniquity may be Purged* *Isa. 1. 25. ch. 27. 9.* Another End is to make them more conformable to Christ which to be, will prove both their Excellency and Happiness; so the Apostle argues, if the Lord Chastens it is for our Profit, that we might be Partakers of his Holiness. And from the like Promises he concludes, *That all Things shall work together for Good to them that love God.* A

Ninth. Is, the Attendance and Ministry of holy Angels, which is a mighty Expression of their Dignity, as well as their Security, telling us they (the Angels) are all *Ministring Spirits sent forth to Minister for them.* Sirs this looks as if God had advanced all his People how Poor and despicable soever in Appearance, to the Dignity and Royalty of Kings. Yea and so it is in a Spiritual Sense For Christ saith the Apostle, *hath made us Kings and Priests to God.* 'Tis true they walk in Masquerade at present, and 'tis not strange they are Invorn'd with Dangers; Kings you know have their Enemies at Home and Abroad, and therefore they have their Guards attending their Royal Persons. So the Godly have their Enemies, and of all others, the most Dangerous, even Spiritual Enemies. Wherefore they have their Guards allotted them, which are Glorious and puissant Angels. For as the Royal Prophet says *The Angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.* By their Ministry we have escaped many Inconveniencies and Evils, and many good turns have been, tho' we consider 'em not. Their Ministry is invisible to us, which makes us so little to observe, and I speak of the Advantages we reap by their Interposing for us. Could we see them as distinctly as we do other Objects, there's not any Danger so great, or Enemies so formidable, as

could make us in the least to fear any more than *Elisha* did; when the great Host of the King of *Assyria* was sent up to *Dotham* to take him. His poor Servant might justly fear, till his Eyes were open'd to see the Angels ministering for his Masters security 2. Kings 6. 15 16 17. And as they are with us in Life, so, they will not leave us in Death, but wait the fatal Stroak, and so soon as our naked Souls shall leave the Threshold of our Pale and trembling Lips, they take 'em into their embraces, and will convoy 'em safe, thro' the Airy Regions, paths they never trod before, infested with Legions of Devils and Damned Spirits, who otherwise would make their Passage into those of Eternal Bliss more difficult and hazardous, at least, in their Apprehension. which brings me to the.

Tenth and last Priveledge which is. That God will take all his People into Heaven and Glory as, Heaven is a Mansion prepared, *an Inheritance reserv'd for them*. This is that which compleats and perfects all the rest. There they shall enjoy a most consummate happiness, as they long to be there, so e'er long he will gather his Elect together from the four Quarters of the Earth, and will say unto 'em all. *Come ye Blessed, Inherit the Kingdom prepared for you*. There shall they be delighted in an open and everlasting Vision of God and his Lamb. There merry shall they be, and Sing his Praises eternally. I now Conclude with 2 or 3 Reflections. And

First. Hence we may be Inform'd, that there is no People in the World like unto the People of God for all true Worth and Excellency, which is evident both from the Properties and Priviledges, of all others they are the most useful and Beneficial, yea, the only secure and happy People, of whom it may be said, as *Moses* of *Israel*. *Happy art thou O Israel, who is like unto thee O People sav'd by the Lord*. And it is not hard to know whether we are

Deut. 33.
29.

are, or are not the People of God, having largely and distinctly acquainted you with their Nature, and what the very Property of their Soul is. Do you maintain their Character, and shew forth in your whole Behaviour that Temper of mind to be in you, which is in them and more especially that was in Christ, and then you may take in the Comfort, and conclude safely, that you are the People of God. Then

Secondly. It Informs us, how highly reasonable it is, that every Man and Woman of you should become the Lords, by preparing your Hearts for, and yielding up your selves to him in every Service his Word requires, therefore Abandon Sin, Contemn the World, and resolve that tho' other Lords have had Dominion over you, that henceforth you will be his, only his, and his for ever. Does any bid so fair for you and your Service? as the Lord doth, and may I not much more bespeak you for him, from the Premises, then Saul did his People saying. *Will the Son of Jesse give every one of you Fields and Vineyards,* place you in Profitable Posts, prefer you to Dignity, make you right Noble and Honourable, and the like, so I say. Can Sin or the World make you so excellent in Nature, bestow on you such Benefits, advance you to such Honour, and render you so happy, as you have heard God will O no, why then, Renounce your Idols, say unto them (I mean your Lusts) *Ye shall no more be our Gods,* but we will turn unto the Lord, and will be his People. And then for your Encouragement, *He will heal your Backsliding, and love you freely.*

1. Sam.

22. 7.

Hos. 14.

4.

Thirdly. It Informs us of the great Obligation that is upon all Gods People, to walk worthy of the Lord, and the Grace he has bestow'd on them in making them his People. On this depends in a great measure the Honour of God the Reputation of Religion, the Winning Sinners over to the Love and Practice of it, and the Joy and Comfort of our

own

own Souls, and to that end, let us all be entreated to walk by his Conduct, *Imitate him as dear Children*, shew forth his Virtues by a Practical Conformity to him, make full Proof of being the Lords People by maintaining and Displaying the Properties of 'em. Sirs, do your Duty, bogle not at any thing which the Lord hath Commanded. And trust not in Lying Words, in Professions and Priviledges, let it not satisfie you, that you bear the Name of Christians, that you are the Children of believing Parents, that you are Baptized, and the like. Let not your Priviledges make you Proud, your fulness make you Wanton, nor the Desire of any thing below God, make you careless of him and his Interest. Think not your selves, your time, and your all too much or too good for that God whose you are, as he by his Grace hath made a difference between you and others, if you are his People. So do ye by an Exemplary Piety distinguish your selves for him, whose People you are, and if so, he will be both your Security and Happiness. Since he hath further said, *and I will be your God*. Which is what remains to be spoken to.





A SERMON

SHEWING,

That the Lord in becoming the God of his People, is the only Ground of their Security and Happiness.

FROM

JEREMIAH, xxx. xxii. *And I will be your God.*

HAVING already open'd to you the Nature and Excellency of engaging the Heart for God in Duty, and how highly he Values it, by expressing himself in Terms most endearing, *As, who is this that engageth his Heart to approach unto me.* Signifying the great delight he hath on beholding Persons so doing; without which as we have shew'd. The most Pompous Service, will not be regarg'd by him. And as it is a mighty Pleasure to him, so it is, what he will generously own, and abundantly recompence by taking them into the Number of his People, whereby he Advances them to Dignity and Honour, and richly furnishes 'em with the choice Priviledges of Grace and Glory. As we have shew'd from those Words, *and ye shall be my People.* I now pass to the last and sweetest part of our Text. Namely. *And I will be your God.* The Words are but few, but there's more in them, than either Men, or Angels know how to Express.

They contain a promise, a very compleat and comprehensive Promise, and is indeed the Sum total of all. For if you Collect all the Promises together with the great and manifold Blessings granted by 'em, you'l find they will not exceed in their amount

amount what is contain'd in our Text, *And I will be your God.* When you have caſt 'em all up, you will find the Sum total lies here.

I ſay it is the chief, yea the Sum of all Promiſes, as therein we have the *moſt high God, Poſſeſſor of Heaven and Earth*, making over by a free Grant to the Sons and Daughters of Men, the chief good, the moſt valuable Bleſſing they can poſſibly receive, Or (with reverence be it ſpoken) that God can poſſibly give. Is there any better than himſelf, or is there any equal to him. O no, for in the Rank of Beings and Bleſſings he's infinitely the beſt. Yea, the Fountain of all, and all in Compariſon of him for Security and happineſs are nothing at all, but broken Syſterns, Wind and Vanity.

The Perſons to whom this Promiſe is made, are thoſe, who prepare their hearts for God in Duty, ſuch who are really Religious and truly Pious, and thoſe theſe are favour'd above others, as the Lord is pleas'd to take them *to be his People*. Yet the Malice of the Devil, the Power of Corruption, and the Imperfection of their beſt Services, beſpeak 'em not to be got beyond the reach of Gun ſhot, and out of Danger. But rather that they would from their own Imbecility and weakneſs, and the Policy and Power of their Enemies, be no ſooner attackt, but overcome, and ſtrippt of all their Priviledges and Excellency. And doubtleſs ſo it would be, were it not that God is pleas'd as in our words, to *become their God*, and ſince he is ſo. Let the Pious Man's diſadvantage and danger be never ſo great, of being riſſed and plunder'd of his Priviledge and Treafure, he's more ſafe than is generally imagin'd having a ſure Security thereof in that the Lord will (as he hath ſaid to his People) be your God. I will undertake for you againſt all Oppoſition I will interpoſe my ſelf for your Security, and if that be not enough, I will be your Felicity and happineſs both here and hereafter. For ſo much the Words do Import.

In speaking to this gracious Promise. We will first open it, and secondly apply it, in opening it will do these 3 things.

First. Shew you in what respects, God may be said to be the God of his People.

Secondly. Shew, that the Security of them and their Priviledges arises purely from this Ground, that the Lord is their God.

Thirdly. We shall demonstrate and lay open this great and comfortable Truth, that to have the Lord for our God, is happiness and Blessedness it self. Or that the People only are truly Blessed that have this God for their God, and so Conclude with some Use.

First. Then, We are to shew you in what respects God may be said to be the God of his People, and that is many. For by whatsoever ways we become *God's People*, by the same he becomes *our God*, as by Creation we are under undefolvable Ties to acknowledge him our Lord and Owner, in this respect he is our only Proprietor, as we have our Beings from him, and maintain'd to us, by his Providence and Bounty. His producing us into being and his daily care of us, as his Creatures, bespeaks him to be our God.

So also by Redemption which is a very clear Expression and Evidence of his being our God, when the Lord came to deliver his Law to Israel from Sinai, see how, and in what endearing Terms he bespeaks the Attention of his People whom he had redeem'd Exodus 20. 2. *I am the Lord thy God which have brought thee out of the Land of Egypt out of the House of Bondage.*

Again, by Choice and Election, as the People of God are the People of his Choice, so they solemnly avouch and chuse the Lord for their God, to fear and serve him. As Joshua 24. Ch. 15 Verse to the End.

Farther, God is truly said to be their God, who enter into his Covenant, and walk therein with Uprightness

Uprightness and Constancy : A solemn covenanting with God is an unquestionable Evidence of his being our God ; for the Covenant is reciprocal and binding on both Parties. *Ezek. 16, 8 Verse,* and so on.

Farther, The Lord is truly the God of all those who make a Religious Profession of him : He was the God of all *Israel*, even of those whose Carcasses, (for their Infidelity) fell, and perish'd in the Wilderness. And tho' many who profess him may be false and treacherous to him and his Interest, whose Servants they profess to be; yet, he is their God, and therefore he endeavours in the Methods of his Grace to reduce them from their Treachery and Baseness, else he will miserably punish such Rebels and Traitors in the Issue, as our Lord did his sloathful and wicked Servant, *Mat. 25. 24 Verse,* and so on.

But in fine, He becomes the God of his People, by a merciful Grant of himself to 'em, according to the Tenour of his declared Will and good Pleasure, he does by Free Gift and an Act of Grace, make himself over to be the God of all those. (1.) Who so truly repent of all their Sins, as to abandon and forsake them, together with the sinful Practices and Worships of the World, (2.) Who by a lively Faith, do believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, whereby they come to be united to, and interested in him: For certain it is, That God will never be reconciled to any Man or Woman destitute of Union with Christ, thro' the Prevalency of Unbelief in them. (3.) To such who obey the Gospel, by a practical Application of themselves to do whatever he has commanded with Hearts prepared for, and fix'd upon him, as such do obey and serve him, becoming his People, and such in whom he will take Pleasure; so they may depend upon it, that the Lord will be their God to bless, protect, and save them, which none can deny without arraiguing the ever blessed God at their

*or at least such have no Bar
evidence that he is reconciled*

Bar as Criminal, and a manifest Impeachment of his Goodness and Faithfulness. But I pass in the

Pf. 22. 6.
Isai. 41
14.

Second Place, to shew, That the Security of God's People, and their Priviledges, ariseth wholly from this Grant which the Lord hath freely made, That he will be their God, *i. e.* He will be with them, and for them. Hence it is, that his People are a Match for their Enemies how potent and mighty soever: True, if we consider 'em, as in themselves, such is their Impotency as renders 'em meet to be termed a Worm, as *David* expresses it, saying, *I am a Worm and no Man.* And the Lord by the Prophet, *Fear not thou Worm Jacob.* What so weak and fenceless as a Worm? Liable to be trod on by every Foot. What more mean and despicable than a Worm? Why truly such are the Godly in the Eyes of the *Goliaths* of this World, so mean, so little, and insignificant, that they even despise them from their seeming Inequality, as *Goliath* did *David*: He disdain'd him: Why, *he was but a Youth*, not likely to know much of military Affairs, too young to have made any considerable Advances in the Knowledge of Martial Efforts, and the Arts of War; yea, *he was also ruddy and of a fair Countenance*, he looked not like one that was acquainted with the Service of the Field, that had endured the Fatigues of a Campaign, and past thro' the Hardships common to a Martial Life. Besides, he came not like a Captain of one of the Troops of Israel, arm'd with Sword and Pistol, but with a Staff, which so enraged this mighty Man, that he cursed *David*, swearing by his Gods, *That he would give his Flesh to the Fowls of the Air, and Beasts of the Field.* But for all these impious Boasts, when the Encounter was begun, the deciding Stroke was quickly given, the Battle fought, and the Victory won, quite contrary to the Thought and Purposes of *Goliath*; and perhaps no less contrary to the Expectation of the Spectators. The Wicked account the Godly as no more than what they can dis-

1. Sam.
17. 40.
to the
end,

patch

patch at a Morsel; and truly so it would be, were it not, that the Lord is their God, which David freely confesses, saying, *If it had not been the Lord that was on our Side, now may Israel say, If it had not been the Lord that was on our Side when Men rose up against us, they had swallowed us up quick when their Wrath was kindled against us:* And was not their Wrath kindled burning hot against many of God's People, both in the last Reign and this, threat'ning in their Rage and Malice to turn their Meeting-Houses into Draught-Houses, with much more not fit to be mentioned here (worthy Patriots as they were) and did not Thousands in their Fury wait the Execution of what they had threatened, and doubtless would have effected it, in a great Measure had it not been for a happy Turn of Affairs, which put a Stop to the Torrent of their Rage, defeated their Purposes, and strangely disappointed both their Expectation and ours. And was this owing to any, but the kind and over-ruling providence of God, whereby he knows how, and often does, in the midst of threatening and amazing Dangers defeat their secret and destructive Conspiracies, and effect the Security of the Godly, which is now our business to prove to you. Namely. *That the Lord in becoming the God of his People, yields to them and their Priviledges, a sure security from Enemies and Dangers, which we shall demonstrate.* (1) From the Nature and Properties of God (2) From the Promises of God. (3) From the Providence of God. And (4) From the Experience of the Godly therein.

First. The Godly Man hath a sure Security from the Attributes of God. For as the Wise Solomon says. *The Name of the Lord is a strong Tower, the Righteous run into it, and are safe.* They are safe as in a Garrison or strong Hold, wherein they have a sure Protection secured to them as appears. From the Love of God, It is the Nature of Love to Consult the Security, and to Contribute for the relief and

and benefit of the Object beloved. Will not a Prince grant Protection to his Favourite. Will a Father that loves his Child, stand by, and see it falling into some apparent, and fatal Danger as the Fire, or Water, and not put forth his Hand to prevent it, or will the loving Husband behold his Wife in apparent hazard of Mischief, and not interpose himself for her Security? It cannot be, much less will God (who is Love it self, and who loves his People with a love more firm and strong than that, wherewith the most Affectionate Husband loves his Wife) stand by unconcern'd while he beholds the People of his Love in real Danger either from Enemies or Evils. Which is first to be loved, and then to be Protected. For says

Dent. 33. *Moses the Beloved of the Lord shall dwell in Safety by him, and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his Shoulders.* The whole 91 Psalm, is a good Comment and Proof of this. Which read at your Leisure, but Vers. 14 15 *Because he hath set his Love upon me, therefore will I deliver him &c.* Also.

From the Knowledge and Wisdom of God. A Man may love his Friend with a most intence Affection, and may have good Will enough to rescue him from the Danger he is in, but may want Wisdom ~~how~~ to contrive how to effect it. But God can never be at a loss in this respect. *Who is Wise in*

Job. 9. 4. *Heart,* and by way of Eminency is said to be a God
1. Sam. 2. *of Knowledge, and by him Actions, Yea all Actions are*
3. *Weigh'd.* Some Men know much, Angels know much more, but God knows abundantly more than they all. He is privy to the most secret of all Hearts, all Contrivances in the first Bblings of 'em

Heb. 4. 12 *in the minds of Men, are open and manifest unto him. There is not any thing knowable, past, present or to come hid from him. For to him are known all his Works from the beginning. That he may, say some, and yet know nothing of what shall come to pass, and of future events. But that's a foul Reflection*

Reflection

flexion on, and an impious derogating from the Excellency of God. Who in this very particular distinguishes himself from all others. Challenging them to bring forth and shew us what shall happen, let them shew the former things what they be, that we may *Isa. 41.* consider them and know the latter end of them, or declare things to come, shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are Gods. Intimating that this knowledge is peculiar to God, which all others whether Idols or Men, Saints or Angels are Ignorant of. In a Word he knows the Plots of the Wicked, the troubles of the Righteous and how to deliver the Godly out of Temptation, and to reserve the Wicked unto the day of Judgment.

Which is further evident from the Power of God. 'Tis possible Men may have both love to Will, and Wisdom to Contrive, but may want Power to effect the Security and happiness of those they love but God who is *Wise in Heart, is mighty in Strength.* To whom there is not any thing hard. He is *Lord of Hosts.* And hath all hosts of Creatures at his beck and dispose. Who Commands them on what Service, and for what purposes he pleases, and they all obey his Will, he turn'd Legions of apostate Angels out of Heaven, casts down the mighty at his Pleasure, turns the Edge of Enemies Swords one against another. He divided the Waters of the Red Sea for the deliverance of his Israel, and made them at the same time a Grave to bury the Egyptians. Infomuch, that Moses in his Triumphant Song, Celebrating the Praises of God for his Supreme Excellency, Notes in a particular manner his Almightyness, Thus. *Thy right Hand O Lord is become Glorious in Power, thy right Hand O Lord hath dashed in Pieces the Enemy, and in the greatness of thine Excellency thou hast Overthrown them that rose up against thee.* And this is what renders the Godly calm and quiet, apt to hope, Nay, humbly, Confident of Security in times of Danger. As the three Children in Nebuchadnezar's Time, his Threats

*Exo. 15.
6. 7.*

Dan. 3 11
to the 19
vers.

Threats was terrible in Case of Nonconformity to his Will, and that haughty Demand he made, *Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my Hand,* was enough to shake the greatest Confidence; but for all that, and more, they were like Men unconcern'd saying, *we are not careful to answer thee in this Matter, the God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery Furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine Hand, O King.* But if not, they were determin'd what to do; they would rather go to Heaven in a fiery Charriot, than to purchase the King's Favour by doing ought unworthy of their God in sinning against him, with whom there is power to uphold the Godly under, to preserve them in, and to deliver them out of all their Troubles. Remember the Burning Bush.

And as in these, so I might proceed to shew you, That the People of God have a sure Defence and Security in the Goodness, Faithfulness, and Unchangeableness of God. If his Goodness inclines him to give his Word to pitty and save them, his Faithfulness will engage his Wisdom and Power to make it good, and then his Unchangeableness renders 'em sure of it, notwithstanding their own Weakness, or the Malice of their Enemies, who says, *I am the Lord, I change not, therefore ye Sons of Jacob are not consumed.* Mal. 3. 6. But I pass.

Secondly, To shew you, that the People of God have Security in and from his promises; and so abundant are they, that no Person acquainted with 'em, can warrantably doubt either of Security, or Happiness: For this End were they all made, namely, to encourage the Wicked to turn to God, and to settle the sincerely Pious, in a firm Assurance thereof. There's enough in the Promise to dismiss all our Fears, and to furnish us with a Confidence never to be shaken: And so it would be, were it not for the Weakness of our Faith, upon the Approach of Dangers and Enemies. That Flaging

aging is sometimes the Effect of a good Man's
 disponding, is certain; for a godly Man would
 hold on his Way without fainting, were his Faith
 but employ'd with Life and Vigour upon the Pro-
 mises, which are both the Object and Food of
 Faith. The Promises are given us, not only to
 believe the Matter and Things contained in 'em,
 but to encourage, settle, and increase our Faith.
 Therefore says the Lord, *Fear not. Why so: Is*
there no Cause? No, For I am with thee, be not dis- *Isai. 41.*
may'd for I am thy God, I will strengthen thee, Yea, I *10.*
will help, Yea, I will uphold thee with the Right Hand *Ps. 50. 51.*
of my Righteousness, And in the Day of Trouble thou
shall call upon me, and I will deliver thee. And the *Isai. 33.*
Prophet speaking of the Godly Man, saith, He *16.*
shall dwell on high, his Place of Defence shall be the *2. Cor.*
Munition of Rocks, Bread shall be given him and his *29.*
Waters shall be sure. And the Lord himself tells
Paul in a Time of sore Tryal, My Grace is sufficient
for thee. Ay, What in every Tryal, in all Dangers,
against every Enemy, unto every Duty, for Secu-
rity here, and Happiness hereafter? Yes, and it
must needs be so, if we consider not only the Truth
and Certainty of the Promises, as they are made
by a Faithful God, and have their Establishment
in Christ who is Truth itself, and in whom they are
Yea and Amen. The Promises are a Womb preg-
nant with all Blessings the People of God can at
any Time stand in Need of, and whenever their
Condition calls for this or that Blessing, whether
it be for Protection or Provision, then Birth is gi-
ven to it, as to the Child at its full Time. Pro-
misses teems forth Mercies for Relief of the Pious
Man; and it cannot be otherwise, while he that
made them is the Faithful God, and thus speaks,
The Lord is a Sun, and a Shield, he will give Grace and
and Glory, and no good Thing will he withhold from
them that walk uprightly. Their Security is certain.
And that

Thirdly, From the providence of God, which is

2 Cro. 16.
9.

the glorious Instrument by which he over-rules all Things in this lower World for his own Glory, and carefully looks to the Concerns, and advances the Interests of his people. For the Eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole Earth, to shew himself strong on the Behalf of them whose Hearts are perfect towards him. By which Words Manan the Sacerdote commision'd from God, reproves Asa for his Folly, in that he who had obtain'd such abundant Success on his relying on the Lord, as his vanquishing Armies so numerous and formidable, as the Ethiopians and Lubims were, shou'd afterwards quit his Dependance on God, by relying on the Assyrians which the Lord resented to such a Degree, as to leave Asa, to his own Conduct, till he was smartly whipt with his own Rod, plain it is, That God by his providence crowns the Attempts of his People with Success and Prosperity while they are becoming his People. The Godly wherever they are, in the Palace or in the Cottage, rejoycing in Prosperity, or besieged with Dangers, His Eye beholds them, his Providence is employ'd for their Security, as it is Extended not only to all places, but over all Persons and things, as Angels and Men, good and bad. The good will not Cross and thwart the designs of God, the Wicked cannot, for Providence is a Bit in their Mouths whereby he not only governs Men and Devils in a way Subservient to his own Glory. But also infallibly effects whatever he proposes, tho' the Course sometimes that Providence takes is very intricate in our Apprehension, yet there is not any thing which can possibly hinder its Progress, and from obtaining its end, which is, the safety of his People. And this is further evident.

Fourthly. From the Experience of the Godly who have had innumerable Proof, and undoubted Instances of Security granted 'em upon the Lords becoming their God. 'Tho' their Confidence has sometimes been laid very low, when their Enemies

and Dangers mounted high, yet he never fail'd
nor disappointed the Expectation of his People,
unless, at such times, when their Sins provoked
him to Anger, render'd it inconsistent with his
own Honour, and their Interest to gratifie 'em, for
which cause he has often Chastis'd by delivering 'em
into the Hands of their Enemies that by their Savage
treatment, they might learn to behave them selves
more suitably to their State, and Obligation, otherwise
he never disappoints them, tho' they be, as they
think brought to a mighty Pinch and Straight,
as Israel at the Red Sea, when they thought
an Escape from the Rage of their Pursuer
was altogether Impossible, were ready to Mu-
tiny, Quarrel'd with Moses their Leader, who
had much to do to quiet them in their Fears
and to perswade them to wait on their God, who
would that day work Salvation for them, which
accordingly he did, and gave them a joyful Expe-
rience thereof, who full of Joy and Rapture (as
one Person) declare their grateful acknowledgment
saying. *I will Sing unto the Lord for he hath Triumphed
Gloriously, the Horse and his Rider hath he thrown into the* Exo. 12.
Sea, The Lord is my Strength and Song. &c. This is a 1. 2.
like evident in Aha's time, who in his strait, Cried, 2. Cron
Help us O Lord thou art our God. Whereupon the Lord 14. 11. 1.
Smote that huge Host which put him in Fear: Also Je-
hoshaphat Confesses in a very great exigence. *We know* Ch. 20.
not what to do but our Eyes are up unto thee. Who, upon
their relying on him, gave 'em Deliverance beyond their
Enemies purpose, or their own expectation, Crown'd
'em with Victory tho' they struck not a Blow in the Bat-
tle, and gave 'em the Spoil of their Enemies *Which made*
'em to return with Joy to Jerusalem, Praising the Lord as
2. Chron 20 Ch. at large. No less did that good Man
Hezekiah with his People when *Senacherib King of As-*
syria Invaded Judah, and took many of their Fenced Ci-
ties, and sent *Rabshakeh* from Lachish to Jerusalem,
where he Blasphemed the Lord their God, and terrifi-
ed the People by Thundering out his Annathema's like
Volleys of Shot upon them. But notwithstanding all
the Proud Boasts of this terrible Man, the Lord Bridled
and

and restrained him *Causing him to return back the way that he came*, defeating his purposes, by giving an unexpected Deliverance to his People. And David, tho' he was a Man of great Faith, yet sometimes he was ready to give up all hope, and to conclude that he and his Interest was quite lost. For says he, *I said in my haste I am cut off from before thine Eyes*. He said it indeed, but it was in his haste, rashly and unadvisedly. But he quickly changes his Note, adding, *Nevertheless thou hast heard the Voice of my Supplication*. The Godly tho' they may go forth weeping, bearing precious Seed, they always return rejoicing, bringing their Sheaves with 'em. And from their experience can say, *Tho' Sorrow be over Night, that Joy cometh in the Morning*. Thus we have shewed, that the Security of the Godly is wholly from this Ground that the Lord is their God.

Now if any Demand why the Lord doth interpose himself for the Security of his People. I Reply for these four Reasons at least.

- 1st. To prevent the Proud Boasts of their Enemies, which in their madness and Folly they would abound with, should the Lord leave his People Fenceless and open to their Wrath and Fury, how would they Vaunt and Swagger, not only in a rude Hectoring and Insulting his People, but in Blaspheming and denying God himself, by attributing all their Mischievous Exploits and successes to the Skill and Power of their own Hand. Tho' his People may by their unworthy Behaviour so far Provoke him, as to determine their Removal, by delivering 'em up to their Enemies Will. Yet he knows their Malice and Madnels to be such, as sometimes happily prevents his bringing 'em into such an exigence and evil State, as he testifies by Moses. *I said I would Scatter them into Corners I would make the Remembrance of them to cease from amongst Men, were it not that I fear the Wrath of the Enemy, lest their Adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say, our hand is high, and the Lord hath not done all this*. It is to be lamented, that Gods People are so bad at any time, as thus to provoke him to displeasure, tho' it is well for them sometimes, that their Enemies are no better than they be.

Another Reason is. That endearing Relation that God hath taken every Pious Man and Woman into, they are not only his People, but *his peculiar People, his Sons and Daughter*

Daughters, his Jewels and Treasure, his Portion and Inheritance. And accordingly he accounts of, and Values 'em. Will he suffer his People to be hurt whom he hath formed for himself, and are the People of his love? Will not he who Cloathes the Grass of the Field, and feeds the little Sparrows by his Providence much more provide for his dear Children. Will he suffer his Jewels and Treasure to be Seiz'd and made a Prey by Hands of Violence? Or will he endure his Inheritance to be laid waste by the wild Beasts of the Forrest? O No, they who attempt to hurt 'em must smart for their Pains, they are *as the Apple of his Eye*, too dear to be neglected; he will preserve 'em whatever it Costs him, *Tho he gives Nations for them, and People for their Sake* Hai. 3. 3-4. A further.

Pl. 1494.

Mat. 6.
26. 28.

Reason is. Their trusting in, and reserfing all matters relating to their Protection and Provision to him. And reliance is such an Act of Faith, as mightily engages God in their Favour, Men may fail such as Confide in them, but the Lord will never disappoint those that trust in him. No, their trusting in him, is the Ground and reason why *he will keep 'em in perfect Peace*. Isai. 26. 23. And says Holy David. *The Lord shall help them, and deliver them from the Wicked, and save them because they trust in him*. The last Reason I shall Name is.

Pl. 97 49.

His Promise and his Faithfulness to perform; there's enough in his Promise to guard us against, and to raise us above Fear; because Security and Support with all other Conveniencies for our comfortable Accommodation is the Matter of the Promise, and his Faithfulness will not suffer him to flinch, nor fail in the Performance of them; but having touched on this before it is sufficient.

But methinks here lies a very considerable Prejudice in our Way which ought to be removed, in Order to our giving full Credit to what has been said, which is, the fiery Persecutions that have been rais'd against God's People in former as well as in the Marian Days; and the modern Barbarities and inhuman Cruelties that are inflicted on some in the Gallies now a Days, where they bastinado, beat, and bruise their Bodies untill the Flesh be rais'd from their Bones: And then by Cordials and other Applications, do recover their fainting Spirits, and prepare their poor macerated Bodies for another Exercise, which they have often repeated, and as I have read, on some

some for many Years together before they expire. A Misery much less to be desired then that of the Stake and Faggot. Now since God leaves them in the Hands and Power of their Tormenters, How does it appear that he is their God, in the Sense and for the Purposes we have been speaking of.

To this I answer, That God hath not tyed up himself, but is at liberty to do what he will with his own, and that the present Sufferings of his People in this World, can be no Prejudice to what we have said, nor is any Ground for impeaching the Care and Concern of God, for the Security and Happiness of his People, as will appear, if we consider these 3 Things.

(1.) That to suffer, and to suffer patiently and perseveringly as the Martyrs did, and Confessors do, is by far a greater Sign and Proof that *the Lord is their God*, than if they suffer'd not at all: And that it is by a supernatural Aid that they so bravely confess Christ, and suffer for his Sake, all the Powers of Nature being too little to enable a Man to endure those Strokes they receive from the Hands of barbarous and unrelenting Men. This must be the Lott of God's People sometimes: He will have a faithful Testimony born for his Name and Truth; but when he calls any of them to so hard Service, he is immediately with and fits 'em for the same. *Fear not for I am with thee*, says the Lord, *be not afraid for I am thy God, I will strengthen thee, Yea, I will uphold thee, with the Right Hand of my Righteousness.*

Isai. 41
10.

(2.) He does not only fit them for hard Service, but he encourages and more abundantly comforts them therein. Of all others the Lord regales his suffering Servants, and delights their Souls with the richest Cordials, and the most satisfying Enjoyment of himself and Love, who by his special Presence with 'em, bears 'em up with Joy and Confidence in the midst of Disgrace and Oblivion, which made *Philpot* to prefer his Cole-House to *Bonner's Palace*: Yea, he unaccountably moderates their Pain in suffering, and oftentimes takes away all Sence thereof, which hath made some to triumph, and clap their Hands in the midst of Flames, and others to suffer with more Patience, and less Reluctance, than their Persecutors have had in tormenting them: The choicest Comforts are kept for them, whom he enables to say with

2. Cor. 1. the Apostle, *As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our Consolations abound in Christ.* (3.)

(3.) In that God makes the Sufferings of his People a most sure Pledge and Earnest to 'em of their reigning with Christ in Heaven and Glory. He hath led us the Way to the Crown by the Cross: And none are so certain of being Crown-wearers, as Cross-bearers. Besides, by this Means their Crown is made more weighty and glorious; as our Enemies puts Weight into the Sufferings of his Servants, so God, (and their Sufferings) puts Weight into their Crown: For if there be Degrees in Glory, as the Apostle illustrates by the Stars, which differ one from another in Lustre and Brightness, then doubtless the greatest Glory is reserved for Martyrs and Confessors of Christ, who says, *Blessed are they which are persecuted for Righteousness sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.* Other Saints shall live with Christ, but these shall reign with him. Who then will account that Man a wise that will not venture the Loss of a Penny, on a fair Probability of gaining Ten Thousand Pound? How much more wise are they, who are content with little Ease to the Flesh for a few Days and to suffer Loss and Pain for Moment, knowing their Sufferings here, does greatly increase the Glory of their heavenly Inheritance. For says Paul, *Our light Afflictions which are but for a Moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.* So that none are more secure and happy, than those who by his Providence are call'd to the Honour of suffering for him, and do accordingly suffer with Patience and Perseverance. Mat 5 10
2 Tim 2 12
2 Cor 4 17

Having thus proved, That the Lord in being the God of his People, is the true Ground of their Security, I now pass to what remains, which is to prove. That he is not less sufficient for their Happiness; and that is next to be done in the Method propos'd. Therefore.

Thirdly. That to have the Lord for our God, is happiness and blessedness it self, and truly if there be any such thing as happiness to be had, it must be in God, who is infinitely the best of Beings, and the most perfect Goodness. Could we search the whole World through, and gather together all the Excellencies of it, and were it possible to possess thy self with them, they could not make the Man happy, who has not the Lord for his God. Nay, ransack Heaven through, and you will find none in that Blessed Region great and good enough to be fix'd upon for Happiness, short of God himself, as we may

may

may learn from the Psalmist, saying, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee, and there is none on Earth I desire besides thee.* Which Words fully acquaints us, that God alone is the happiness of Man. Now there is three things necessary for the making him a compleat happiness, and those truly blessed who have him for their God.

Ephes 3
20

(1.) That he is an all sufficient God, every way able to do more than we can ask or think, so the Apostle expresses it, with an abundantly. *Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think* There is such a fulness, yea redundance, in him as is sufficient not only to fill and furnish the Sainss of that Age, but of all Saints in all Ages, from the beginning of the World to the end thereof. The Reason why the Lord Presses Abraham to Care and Constancy in Duty, is the

Gen 17

Consideration of his all sufficiency. *Walk before me and be thou perfect, for I am the Almighty, or all sufficient God.* As if he had said to Abraham, be not over Sollicitous for any thing, only believe what I say, and do as I bid thee, and then trouble not thy self about Security and happiness, I'll take care of that for thee, who only am all sufficient for that purpose. By my Almightyness I can protect and save thee from all Evils that either Men or Devils by their Seperate or United Force at any time would bring upon thee. And from my perfect and everlasting Goodness I can yield thee every thing for making thee happy in the highest degree. Whatsoever is great and good that the Lord is said to be, as light, and love, Peace, and Joy, Life and Glory, Treasure and Pleasure Rest and Tranquility, yea, Happiness and Blessedness it self. Insomuch that when Pious Men have been Admitted but to a very weak and Imperfect Sight

Exo 34 8

of God, *they have bowed the Head with Moses and Worshipped.* And as it were in a Rapture have said O what Glory and happiness is here. And the Disciples on the Holy Mount, seeing the Glory of Christs Transfiguration, how entirely were they overcome with the Delights of it, and ravish'd with a Happiness they thought not of, which made 'em willing to abide there, loath to come down, *Let us build three Tabernacles* says Peter *one for thee, one for Moses and one for Elias, It is good to be here,*

Mat 17 4

by no ways willing of a Removal. And St. Paul when sat down again from the third Heavens whereinto he had been taken, and had seen and heard things impossible to be

uttered

uttered, How strong were his desires? How unwearied were his Endeavours, and restless was his Soul, while short of the Enjoyments of God? His Eye was upon him, and with Vigour he presses towards him, whom to enjoy is the Grand, nay, the only Scope of his Soul.

On the other Hand whenever a Person or People forsake God, expecting Happiness from any other Cause, how culpable are such, and justly chargeable, as they plunge themselves into the Guilt of a double Sin, and such Sins too, as the Heathen Nations detested the Thoughts of, never done by them, nor by any, but those who were under the strongest Obligations to the contrary. For says the Lord by Jeremiah, *Pass over to the Isles of Chittim and see, and send unto Kedar, and consider dilligently, and see if there be such a Thing. Hath a Nation changed their Gods, which are yet no Gods, But my People have changed their Glory, for that which doth not profit.* This is so unaccountable and strange, as may fill Heaven and Earth with Astonishment and wonder. For my People have committed two great Evils, they have forsaken me the Fountain of living Waters, i. e. of all true Felicity and Happiness; and have hewed out to themselves Cisterns, broken Cisterns that can hold no Water, That is empty and void of Happiness. Thus its evident that the Lord alone is All-sufficient. The

Jer. 2 10.
11.

Verf. 12.
13.

(2.) Thing requisite, to his being our Happiness, is, That he is our God. For what does his All-sufficiency avail us, if we have no Interest in him? To know him to be every Way sufficient for the Happiness of others, even all that conform to him in the Temper of their Minds, and the Course of their Lives, and not know him to be our God and Happiness, will be but the more grievous and afflicting. For a poor Man to behold the Grandeur of a Princess, the sparkling Diamonds, the Heaps of Gold, the full Barns, the beautiful Eddifices, the rich Apparel, and well furnish'd Tables of the rich and wealthy, he may fancy such are happy, whose Things these are, but alas, what am I the better for them (he may say) they are none of mine. It is Right and Property entitles us to Happiness. Therefore all truly pious Men and Women may comfortably conclude on an Interest in God, and that this God is their God, by Virtue of a Deed of Gift, whereby he hath transferr'd and made a full Grant and Conveyance of himself unto them, by which Means

K

they

they enjoy a surer Title to him, and to all that he is and hath for Happiness, then they can possibly have to any inferior Blessing they do possess, since he hath said to *em*, *That ye shall be my People, And I will be your God.* The

(3.) Thing necessary in God, to his being our Happiness, is, That he is eternal and for ever. Our Souls are of an eternal Duration, therefore God must be so, else he cannot be a proportionable and adequate Happiness. But he is the same Yesterday, to Day, and for ever, before the Mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the Earth and the World, even from Everlasting to Everlasting thou art God. He is liable and subject to Alteration and Decay, therefore the Church triumphs in him saying, *This God is our God, for ever and ever, He will be our Guide down unto Death.* Here is your Security in this Life, and after Death he will receive all his People into Glory, and be their Happiness for ever. Thus appears every Thing to be in God that is necessary to his being a perfect Happiness to his People, which is evident, not only from what he is, but also,

From the universal Consent and Concessions of his People, in their several Ages and differing Circumstances, whether prosperous or Adverse, Protection, with an Affluence of good Things and the Light of God's Countenance will even make us fancy ourselves to be a very happy People as Moses on that Account declared Israel to be, saying, *Happy art thou O Israel! Who is like unto thee? O People sav'd by the Lord.* No People like unto them in the whole World, who had God interposing himself for their Security and Happiness, as they had. To this David Testifies saying, *Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help.* And else where, *Blessed are they that dwell in thy House for they will be still Praising thee.* O happy People to whom God will be always manifesting himself, by the Noble Acts of his Love and kindness, whereby he so Ravishes their Hearts with Joy, as Inclines 'em with delight and settled purposes to celebrate his Praises, and that whilst they have any being. Nay, Conceive a Man furnish'd with all the Excellencies of Nature, and Possess'd with all Advantages that Wind and Tide can bring in unto him, put him into the highest Prosperity, Crown him with Successes according to his utmost Desires, and tho' we may say of such a Man, happy is he, yet alas his Happiness is not what Men take it to be, at best it is but Painted, it Fades and decays, 'tis no Happiness in Comparison of that Mans, whose God is the Lord. Nay strip a Pious Man of all his Worldly Excellencies, behold him under the Correcting Hand of the Lord, smarting and Groaning under the Pain and Pressure of Affliction yet happy he is. For Ps. 94. 12 *Blessed is the Man whom thou Chastenest O Lord. And happy is the Man that endureth Temptation.* The Lord in Chastening his People

Ps. 90. 2.

48. Ch.
14.Deut. 33.
29.Ps. 146 6.
84 4Ps. 144
154Jam. 1.
12.

further

further their Happinefs, as he thereby Subdues the Power of Sin in them, and makes 'em more Conformable to himself. On which Account David acknowledgeth that it's good for him, that he was Afflicted, the Reason is, *before he was afflicted he went astray, but now he hath learned to keep God's Statutes.* Nay behold him Cloath'd with Obloquy, loaden with Calumny and the reproaches of the Wicked, Suffering both loss and Cross for the name of Christ and his Holy Religion, Yet happy is he, as his present Sufferings for Christ under the Malice and rage of Enemies, is a certain Pledge and Token, that he shall live and *Reign with Christ* in Glory. Nay; altho' their Bodies were Rotting in the Grave, or Consum'd into Ashes, yet happy are they, as they are come to the end of their Wearisome Marches, have a full Discharge from the burden and Pain both of Duty and suffering, are now, and for ever got beyond the Gun shot of Temptation, and out of the Reach of their Enemies Malice, and that which is yet much more. They are got above all Possibility of Sinning, and of making a Forfeiture of the Happinefs blest Souls are in the Possession of, and so with the Spirit. *Blessed are the dead that lie in the Lord, for they rest from their Labour, and their Works Follow them.* They follow 'em as so many Witnesses testifying to the Candour and Sincerity of their Piety, until they receive the full Reward of it, which is the Vision and fruition of God, who is the Happiness of his People, as he is, and *will be thir God for ever and ever*, nothing remains now, but that we make some Application.

First. Then it may be for Lamentation, that God who is the happiness of his People, should be so generally neglected and slighted as he appears to be, even quite overlook'd by the Wicked, who from their Pride seek him not, nor give him any Room in their thoughts; Nay, they renounce all dependance upon him, unworthily imagining that he cannot do any thing for them, altho' *He, that hath fill'd their Houses with good things.* Yet that which is worse, if he comes near their Dwellings, either by Convicting or Correcting, in Order to their reformation, they from a Settled and Rooted Malice adjure him to be gone, saying *Depart from us, for we desire not the Knowledge of thy Ways.* But are there any now a Days, who speak in this Language; Yes doubtless

Psal. 119.
17.2 Tim. 2.
12.1 Pet. 4.
12. 13.

14.

Psal. 40.
4.Job. 22.
17, 18.Chap. 21.
14.

less the Covetous who love Mammon, more than God, the Voluptuous, who love Pleasure more than God, these together with all unclean and Prophane Persons whoever they be are high in the neglect and Contempt of God. But that which is yet more to be lamented, is, That many who profess God, and would be reckoned of the Number of his People do manifestly slight him by disobeying his Commands, in a seldom attending his House and Ordinances, and when they do attend him therein, with what Indifferency and unfixedness of Spirit is it? Also by doing things in their retirement, like the *Antients of Israel*, without any Regard to the Eye of God beholding them, which they would be ashamed to do in the Sight of Men, and likewise by departing from the Settled and Stated ways of his Worship, and at last abandon and forsake all appearances of Godliness, by giving up themselves to dishonesty, and to a wicked Course of Living, thus *Jeshurun* did, and many now a days do, and that is to be lamented. But.

Secondly. We may learn from what has been said, that Atheism is a very unreasonable and Foolish thing, Folly is the Motto which the Holy Ghost has inscribed over the head of the Atheist, as *Ps. 14. 1st. The Fool hath said in his Heart there is no God.* He hath said it indeed but he's a Fool for his Pains, as he denies the greatest of Truths, banishes the most Excellent of Beings out of the World, and deprives us at once of all possible relief against all or any of these Calamities and distresses, we are liable to in this World, and of all happiness in the World to come. On which Account, there is not any thing so Impious in respect of God nor that carries in it more apparent Folly than the denying him a Being who is as you have heard, the Fountain of all Blessedness, and the Sole happiness of his People. Nor is there any thing more Pernicious to Men, than the Natural tendency of Atheism is, which is to destroy all Order and Government, all Religion and Virtue in the World. To publish the sacred Scriptures to be nothing else but a Pile of Mistakes and Errors (as if Men were in Danger to be Cheated by them) being made useful Holy and happy, and to introduce all manner of Wickedness, as Violence, Fraud, Murder, and what not. For if Men can once settle themselves in this Belief, that there is no God, no divine Rule to direct and Govern us, no Heaven to reward, nor Hell to punish us, then we need not stick at any thing our Wild Fancies can propose to us, or our Censual Appetites can desire. *Let us eat and Drink, call our fill of Love, do whatever is right in our own Eyes, for Tomorrow we die,* and there's an end of all as they imagine.

But as Atheism, is most impious in Respect of God and most mischievous to Man, so it is destructive to themselves; for if they are mistaken, as doubtless they are

from all that's evident, how fatal must such a Mistake be, as they wilfully deny the Being of God, against the Stream of all Evidence which Nature gives us, and the concurrent Testimonies of the Word of God? What Desperadoes are they who dare thus run themselves upon the Piques? The only Guard and refuge the Atheist hath against the Terrours of God and Conscience, is natural Courage, Hardness of Heart, contracted by vicious Living, and wretched Conclusions drawn from Premises which (to them) are very uncertain at best: But those, and a Thousand more of that Kind, can no more guard against the Battering Pieces of God's Wrath and Vengeance, than a Spider's Webb can, against a Cannon Shot. History tells us, That *Caligula*, when it thundred, crept under his Bed thro' Fear; And that *Tiberius* complain'd frequently of Stings and Lashes he felt in his Conscience, which fill'd him with Confusion. And that late English Gentleman, the Subject of the Second Spira, after he had long and stiffly deny'd the Being of God, He thus in Horror of Soul says, "O Apostate Wretch, from how great Hopes am I fallen? O that I had never known what Religion had been, then had I never deny'd my Saviour, nor become so black an Heir of Perdition." And a little before his Death, says he, "This is my Wound that, that God whom I have deny'd, is become my Enemy; and there is none so strong as to deliver me out of his Hands, who consigns me over to his Wrath and Vengeance, &c. And at last he dies uttering these Words, "O the unsufferable Pangs of Hell and Damnation! But

Thirdly, It speaks Comfort to the People of God, whatever their State and Condition is in this World, tho' it were as bad as it can be, and they in Appearance at the Point of perishing; yet in that God will be their God, they of all People in the World are most safe, the best provided for, and most assuredly happy; let Things go how they will, the steadfast Belief of this quiets them in the greatest Hurries, supports 'em under tormenting Fears that arise from Enemies and Dangers, and hath fill'd 'em with triumphant Songs in the midst of inhuman Cruelties, says David, *Tho' the Earth be removed, and tho' the Mountains be carry'd into the midst of the Sea, tho' the Waters thereof roar and be troubled, and the Mountains shake with the swelling thereof, we will not fear. Why not fear*

Covenant Security, and

fear? Why because, *God is our Strength and Refuge, a very present Help in Trouble. He is in the midst of us, he will help us, and that right early.* Nay that which insures Comfort to the People of God, is, That *he will be their God for ever and ever.* There is not any in Heaven who will, and neither Men nor Devils can untie the Knot, which knits God and Pious Souls together: None can spoil the Comfort of their Covenant Relation, nor work a Separation between them; neither Enemies nor Afflictions, *Life nor Death, Things present, nor Things to come,* if Sin does not. Sin is the only Make-bate between 'em, the alone Spoiler of our Peace and the Bane of our Comfort. I say, nothing can hurt, nor needs to damp a Christian Man's Joy and Comfort, but Sin, which let us carefully watch, and guard against, as it is the only Ruiner of Souls.

Fourthly, If God only be the Happiness of his People, then labour with all your Powers, to know that this God is your God, the Knowledge whereof will not only relieve against the Calamities of Life, and the Fears of Death, but will assure you of Happiness after Death, And to the End that we may know the Lord is our God. (1.) Endeavour to abandon all Sin: Sin liv'd in with Allowance is the Devil's Mark, and bespeaks us to live in his Empire, and under his Dominion. (2.) Labour a Conformity to God in the Frame and Temper of your Minds; maintain humble, holy, and heavenly Affections: there is not any Thing will so clearly evince this to us, as a lively resembling him in the Dispositions of our Souls. And then (3.) answerably thereunto maintain Purity of Life, which is nothing else, but being obedient to all his Commands: And such, who are so, may depend upon it, since he who is faithful hath said, *I will be your God.*

Fifthly, and lastly, If God in becoming the God of his People be their only Security and Happiness, and if this God be your God, why then be exhorted with Chearfulness and Resolution to these 4 Things.

(1.) To use him as your own, i. e. live upon him, and to him: He is your Portion, and an All sufficient One (as you have heard) Men use to live on their Portions, and they reckon that, all they have to live upon. Now by living on God, I do not mean, a lavish spending on our Lusts the Patrimony he has given us for very different

Rom 8:

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Isai. 59

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Ends and better Purposes; but acting Faith in him, whereby we derive Grace from him, and by living in the Daily Exercise of it, you'll grow up into his Likeness, which is the best Proof of your living on him, and to him.

(2.) Consult him at all Times, make him your Counsellor, walk by his Conduct. You know we are apt to go astray from God, to walk in by Paths, and to grow wanton by Prosperity, lifting up the Heel against him: But more especially in Adversity, when perhaps we may not know what to do, which Way to look, nor how to extricate our selves from amidst the Dangers wherewith we are besieged; but then God knows how to open a Way for our Escape: Therefore advise with him, seek not to wise Men, but unto the Lord; consult his Word, and he will guide you with his Council.

(3.) If the Lord be your God, then rely upon, and trust in him: It may be he, may not speedily hear to save you, and perhaps it's worse with you than your thought of; yet, it can never be so bad as needs to sink your Faith, and why you shon'd quit your Trust in him. What tho' Men rise up against us, and become our Enemies without Cause, mighty Men who are compared to Bulls of Bashan that breath forth Cruelty, whose Malice is such that nothing will satisfy their ravenous and savage Appetites but our Flesh and Fortunes, who are restless to work our Ruin, and ready to swallow us as a Morsel: Yet, the Lord our God is to be trusted in; Nay, what tho' he exercise you under Providential Contradictions, as when a latter Providence seems to undo, all that hath been done by a former, or when Providence so apparently thwarts the Promise as to deprive us of the Comfort we expected. This was David's Case, he had a Promise of a Kingdom, yet before the Accomplishment of it, in his Advancement to the Throne. How did Providence cross his Expectation? And he to whom the Promise was made, was haunted like a Partridge upon the Mountains, his Enemies, Dangers, and Fears increased, in so much, that in his haste, he gave up all Hope, spake dispondingly, and said, *I shall one Day perish by the Hand of Saul.* But in a calm and sedate Mood, he determin'd quite otherwise, as Psa. 56, 3. *What Time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.* Nay, suppose the Case yet worse, our Fears increasing, and Refuge failing, Dangers threatening, proud Enemies insulting, our Hope fainting, and all visible Means

Means of Deliverance vanish'd and gone, so that none can tell by what Means Jacob shall arise. Tho' this were our Case (which blessed be God it is not, nor as some of late would have had it) yet the Lord is to be trusted in; His Hand is not shortened that he cannot save, His Faithfulness reacheth to all Generations. He never fail'd any that did trust in him; and you have his Word that they who do, shall never be ashamed. Sooner or latter your Experience will force you to acknowledge, That the Lord is righteous and there is no Unfaithfulness in him.

Ps. 92 15

(4.) Love and praise him: O admire his Grace in becoming your God, and thereupon in securing to you, your Liberties and Priviledges here, and of becoming your Happiness for ever; of both which we are assured, in that he says, *And I will be your God*; your God both for Time and Eternity. Let us therefore with David, *Sing Praises to our God, sing Praises, yea, resolve to praise the Lord, for it is good, sing Praises to our God for it is pleasant, and Praise is comly for his People, who e'er long in the Height of Bliss will find it so, and sing Praises to him for ever and ever. Amen.*

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